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*Ann Mary Sewall*

# NETHERTON-ON-SEA.

A Story.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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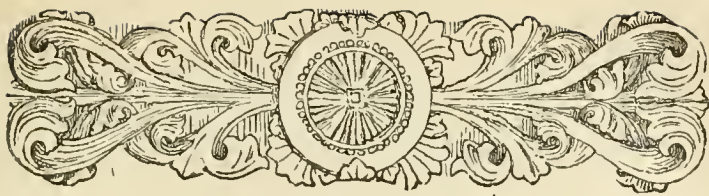
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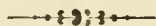
Dear Mr. Mac







# NETHERTON-ON-SEA.



## CHAPTER I.

### NETHERTON.

**T**HE town of Netherton-on-Sea has grown up within the last half-century from being little more than a fishing-village to be a trading-mart and a packet-station. Tall chimneys now support a brooding cloud of smoke, where, within the memory of middle-aged men, the salt sea-breeze played over the yellow grass and the tidal pools of the marshes. Through those marshes the sluggish river Even (originally, it may be surmised, one of the many British Avons) made its way to the sea,—

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half the day a broad salt canal, the other half a waste of brown mud with a turbid runnel in the middle. Now, all this transition state of the Even is masked by docks and basins; and its queer name is read in a dozen combinations on rows and streets and terraces. We have Evendale, Even-side, Evenport; a whole populous suburb is called Evenborough; a conspicuous villa facing westward over the sea rejoices in the romantic appellation of Eventide; and a facetious manufacturer has built a large agglomeration of "works," inscribed over the entrance, in gigantic letters, EVENSO, and rambling on into a great ugly "annex," inscribed, in its turn, EVENMORE.

Fine churches are seldom met with on the coast, and that of Netherton had been no exception to the rule. A massive stone tower, hardly asserting its superiority above the big roofs which had gathered

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around it, was the only sign which the national establishment gave, as Netherton was seen from the neighbouring hills.

Those hills rose on either side the town, leaving only the estuary and its bordering fields. Their outline was mostly flat, and the promontories which ran out into the valley were not rounded off, but sloped almost in straight lines down to the meadows. Seaward the face of the hills north and south of the town was escarped into noble cliffs. That on the north was a sheer mass of gray limestone, reaching at its highest point about 300 feet; while the southern cliff showed a succession of sloping grassy terraces interposed between the stratifications of the stone.

Up the steep face of this cliff, nearest the town, climbed a series of villas and gardens, leading to what was once the sister-village of "Overton-at-Cliff," or as

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the "rising generation," smitten by mediaevalism, now insist on spelling it, "atte Cliffe." Its humble church and bell-cot had long ago given way to a pretentious but pretty gothic successor, with a somewhat exaggerated spire, whose height had been increased by a grant from the Trinity Board, that it might serve for a mark at sea.

Round this spire were grouped the cottages *ornées* and the mansions of the Netherton aristocracy; and it must be confessed that the lines had fallen to them in pleasant places. The sea view was of course magnificent, as every sea view from a height must be; and landward even the smoky town looked interesting, embosomed in green hills, whose promontories stretched away fainter and fainter with the windings of the river disappearing in the distance.

As the road descends from Overton,

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after it has passed the houses and gardens, with their bright bell-handles and their motley-coloured and patterned walls and palings, it reaches a waste uneven space, stretching as far as the bridge over the Even and the railway terminus. It is, in fact, an exhausted brickfield waiting to be built over; the resort of idle children by day and of wauling cats at night. For the former of these there was abundant matter of amusement. All manner of rubbish was carted to this space, and lay in heaps, ready to form embanked streets when building time arrived. Why it had not arrived, was accounted for by the fact that this ground was extra-parochial, having been in ancient days part of the beach; and men of law were not yet agreed as to its appropriation and government. From this circumstance, it passed by the name of "No-man's Land."

At a certain moment, not many years since, "No-man's Land" was the almost undisputed territory of a band of young ones of the rougher order; such as seem to be always out of school, just because they never are *in* it.

Among these children was one incomparably more ragged than the rest. He was a lad of some fourteen years old, and the most complete picture of an unkempt, uncared-for scamp. The mop of tangled tow which served for his hair hung in mats, and flapped in the wind as he moved. Part of a shoulder peeped out from what had been a jacket; the feet of course were bare, and the torn fringe which terminated the trousers could hardly be said to reach below the knees.

In justice it should be said, that this extraordinary being had a countenance far from repulsive. The face was round, with

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a straight comely mouth and a pair of large black eyes. Strange to say, it was a face which, full turned upon you, made you for the moment forget the roughness and the rags. There was a look of loving good-nature, coupled with a sly insinuating humour, and withal a something eerie and, so to speak, far-away, in the look out. The better class were seen, as they went to and fro, stopping and talking to the lad as if he had been clad like other people. You felt sure, whatever question you had to ask, that you would get the best answer fourteen years had to give; that whatever could be known by such a boy was known, and would be well put into words, by that boy. And no one was ever seen to offer him anything. Somehow people forgot that he was ragged and needy. There was that in the look and voice which absolutely forbade almsgiving.



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At the moment specified, this youth was in full game and high frolic with about half-a-dozen boys and girls mostly younger than himself. There was much running backward and forward in a kind of maze; and there appeared to be a ball hit about and thrown up to a group in the centre, as in the game of rounders. The others evidently looked up to the ragged lad, who seemed the arbitrator of differences and the doer of kindly deeds. One little fellow, passably dressed, stumbled as he ran, and fell over some loose brickbats on a heap of oyster-shells. The ragged one darted to the spot and comforted the blubbering urchin, while he brushed the dirt from his clothes.

“Look out, ‘Pak,’” cried a voice;  
“here come the scholars.”

“I’m alive, Benjie; all right.”

The “scholars” were generally the

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signal for a breeze. They were the youths forming the school of Dr. Digam, which still, in defiance of the great proprietary "college" on the slope over Evenborough, maintained its place as the ancient grammar-school of Netherton. A ragged lad was always fine sport for the "scholars;" and though the wild good-nature of "Pak," coupled with his reputed omniscience as to various matters which interest boys, had won some of them for his friends, even those were half-ashamed of him; and the rest—and notably of course the more worthless lads in the school—simply regarded him as they would a cat or a rat, an object to chase and to shy stones at. However, this was not immediately their mood on the present occasion. One or two of the young gentlemen had not forgotten the feel of Pak's hard grip and sharp knuckles on occasion of the last

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*mêlée* ; and the bigger boys had with them a wire-haired terrier, with which they were ferretting the holes in the broken ground for rats.

It should have been mentioned that a little well-dressed girl, with her school-satchel and slate, was sitting on a brick-heap, watching the play. It was Pak's turn to strike the ball. As he threw it up and lifted his bat to hit it, he caught sight of the little girl, who started suddenly from her seat, and threw up her arms in dismay. At the same moment, a cry of "Tiffy! Tiffy! to the chase!" burst from the scholars. The whole scene was changed in an instant. Schoolboys and terrier seemed converging upon some object—the former picking up oyster-shells and whatever came to hand, the latter tearing along, *ventre à terre*, in full cry, and meaning unmistakable mischief.

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Pak had let drop his bat and ball, and, with the rapidity and firm course of a barefoot runner, was in among them hitting out right and left, and knocking over like ninepins the small boys who were hindmost. The little girl was following at a safe distance ; and the "rounder" party, headed by Benjie, straggled after, seeming as if they had rather not be in at the fun, whatever it was to be.

What was the meaning of all this? A gaunt object was stalking along the road which, as has been said, bordered the eastern side of "No-man's Land." It was a tall spare man, wrapped in what had once been a cloak, trimmed with fur, and having on his head an old German smoking-cap. The owner of this quaint costume had his face turned across the brick-field to the sea, where the sun was just setting in splendour, with a track of fire

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bridging the waves to the sinking disk. Consequently, his eyes were directed across the very spot where all this rush was taking place ; and already several pieces of brick and oyster-shell had whizzed by, in what would have been to anyone else most unpleasant proximity. Still he seemed abstracted, or perhaps dazzled, in his gaze on the sun, and was unconscious of it all. This could not have lasted long ; for the foremost of his persecutors were rapidly approaching him. But another occupation was found for them, in the midst of which the intended victim stalked off the scene as he had come on it. Pak, in a few seconds, was even with the first rank, made up of boys considerably bigger than himself.

“ Let the man alone, I say, you lot of cowardly bullies ! ”

In an instant, the chase was at an end,

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and four great fellows had closed in on its bold interrupter. For a few moments he held his own, and was dealing formidable blows, clearing the space first on one side of him, then on another, when a big boy, watching his opportunity, "fetched" him a kick with his heavy boot under the right knee, and brought him to the ground. The little girl, who by this time had come up, sent forth so shrill a shriek on seeing this, and Pak was so soon on his legs again, and so evidently not yet beaten, that the boys, muttering that they should not be back for school-call, but in truth not half liking the job, made off along the road to Netherton, leaving "rags" and the little lassie alone in the field.

Anyone who was on the high-road at the time might have observed a tender passage between these two; might have seen her take out her little clean hand-

kerchief and bind it round the wound ; after which a certain approximation of the two figures suggested the idea that even a kiss had passed from the grateful hero. "They needn't have kicked me *there*," he murmured ; and, saying it, he limped off with somewhat of a grandiose air, leading his companion by his side.







## CHAPTER II.

EMMY.

**T**HE little girl thus borne off in triumph looked a bright creature tripping along by Pak's side, her eyes sparkling, and cheeks all a-glow with the excitement of the late adventure. A striking contrast, too, with her pretty red cloak, neatly-strained stockings, and holeless boots, to the ragged hero who formed her escort. But a real hero he was to her notwithstanding, as besides her eager eyes her very gait and step testified. Those same eyes were, perhaps, Emmy's chief claim to beauty. They were very large, dark brown in colour, with long lashes, curving

backwards. But their charm lay in a constantly varying expression. One moment they sparkled with fun, the next they were sad and pitiful, and had a habit of subsiding by a soft *diminuendo* into that grave, thoughtful, dreamy look which in a child is the most touching of any. Her hair was of a rich auburn, and hung in clustering natural curls round the shapely little head and against the rosy cheeks. As for her features, they were small and childish, with nothing particularly striking about them. The general result, however, was that anyone who met her on her way to school, with her happy, healthy face, would note her as a very comely little maiden.

There were two or three close lanes branching off from the old High-street by which the two entered Netherton, and leading down to the river, which, curv-

ing from the bridge over which they had passed, skirted that side of the town. At the entrance of one of these, the two parted company, and betook themselves,—he, whithersoever it might happen; she, in some haste, to her cosy home, near the end of the dismal alley. It was, as we have already hinted, far on in the evening, and that of an autumn day. This Emmy seemed suddenly to discover, and besides, that it had clouded over, and a misty rain was beginning to fall. So, with somewhat of a depressed feeling, she ran down the narrow lane, which deepened in gloom onwards, from the fact that the huge roof of a newly-erected factory towered over it to the west. Not far from the end, she reached a lower house than any of the others, standing slightly apart from them all, but absolutely nestling under the corner of the great factory just mentioned.

It looked on the outside a gloomy-enough place for so bright a little creature to call her home. But directly she had opened the door and peeped in, the whole aspect of things was changed. It seemed like a bit of enchantment to one who came in from the gloom without. A bright wood-fire illuminated the room and all that was in it, from the well-scoured kettle that sung on the hob, to the bit of crimson curtain drawn across the one little window, and the many gay pictures pinned against the wall. On a low chair in front of the fire, with one hand shading her face from the blaze, and with the other holding some bread to toast at the bars, sat Emmy's mother. The mother was not unlike her daughter, only the roses had faded out of her cheeks, and the fun and frolic had gone from her eyes. But it was a gentle, lovable face; and the smile that greeted

Emmy on her entrance was a very sweet one.

“My mother, how beautiful you look!” exclaimed the little maiden; “I must rub my eyes to be sure I’m not in a dream. You can’t think how dark and gloomy ’tis out of doors; this brightness quite dazzles me.”

“I know it must be dark, my child; for, see, it’s just half-past five. What kept you so late? Were you naughty at school?”

“O no, mother, I was as good as gold, and have been out of school this ever so long. I’ll tell you all about it when we’re having our tea, but I’m cold and hungry now.”

The mother looked anxiously at her little girl for a minute; but then, finding she was wet, gave all her thoughts to getting her cloak and boots dry; and it was

not till they were half-way through their tea that she again asked Emmy what she had been doing.

Now the little girl had been dreading this question all the time, and the prospect of it had considerably interfered with her enjoyment of the hot toast and tea. For this same ragged hero of hers was the only point of contention between her and her fond mother. Mrs. Benson had been left a widow when Emmy was two years old, and for the last ten years had striven bravely, and for the most part cheerfully, to maintain her little daughter and herself. Sam Benson, as he was universally called, was quite the tip-top carpenter of the place, and a highly-respected member of society. But he had, in an evil hour, taken the typhus-fever, which was at that time the possessing demon of back streets in country towns ; and, with a boy older than

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Emmy, and another a baby, had been carried off in a few weeks.

Although, after the stoppage of his ample receipts, his widow found herself in a very different position, yet amidst all her struggles she maintained very strongly her feeling of respectability, and was most anxious to keep little Emmy from undesirable companions. Till lately, nothing had occurred to arouse her fears for the child. When not in the schoolroom or playground, she was quite content with her mother, and they two had been all in all to each other. Often in the long summer evenings they would lock up their small possessions in the cottage, and go off together to the fields, as happy as though there were no such thing as care or toil in the world. On these occasions they would return at dusk, with their hands full of flowers to deck up their little



room on the morrow. But a few weeks before this time Emmy had formed a new acquaintance, and had thereby given cause of great anxiety and annoyance to her mother.

This was how it came about. Emmy had been sent off one morning with a basket on her arm to purchase a supply of apples in the market. The good-natured countryman who kept the stall, taken with the little maid's pretty looks and manner, gave her extra full measure, and filled her basket to overflowing. She was carrying it home delighted, and with special care, when she came to an open space which she was obliged to cross. Close to it a lot of rough boys were playing; and just as she had achieved half her journey over the dangerous ground, suddenly a swift ball struck the basket out of her hand, and dispersed its contents on the muddy

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road. An eager scramble at once began among the young Arabs for Emmy's scattered treasures, the poor little maiden sitting down meanwhile on the pump-trough hard by in utter misery. She had been thinking of her mother's pleased surprise at seeing so many more apples than she had bargained for ; and this was such a sudden damp to her happy thoughts, that the poor child felt quite broken-hearted. But presently she raised her sad eyes, and looked wonderingly about her. A scuffle was going on—it seemed to her a dreadful fight—over these same apples. One boy, the most ragged of the lot, was loudly declaring that he it was who had thrown the ball that knocked them over,—that he had a right to say what should be done with them, and that he chose they should all be given back to the little girl again. However, might being right among

these young savages, and the speaker standing alone on his side, there was some fist-work to be done before he could gain his point. But his sinews being powerful, and a firm purpose being like a driven wedge, not right only, but might also declared for him. Before long the pack of thieves were beaten off, and honesty remained victorious.

Then Emmy, her eyes growing large with wonder, saw her champion carefully pick up all the apples, swill off the mud from them in the pump-trough, and then place them carefully, looking more rosy and shining than ever, in the basket again. She was still in doubt whether he could be doing this for her, when he came and asked her where he should carry them for her.

“O, how good you are!” she said.  
“I can’t tell how to thank you; but really

you mustn't carry them for me ; I can take them quite safely now ;" and, looking up at him gratefully, she put out her hand for the basket.

But it was of no use : her ragged friend was evidently accustomed to have his own way ; and telling her with a pleasant smile to lead on, and the apples would follow, he shouldered the basket.

Then Emmy slid her little hand into his rough brown one, and chatted away to him as they went along, as if she had known him all her life.

It is a curious thing, that intuitive knowledge of character which children often possess, and indeed those domestic animals also who are next below our children—feeling instinctively where to trust entirely, and where not.

Emmy and Pak were firm friends before they parted at her mother's door ;

and the thankful little damsel told her benefactor, with tears in her eyes, that she should always love him for being so good to her.

But the mother's delight at the large store of apples did not come up to Emmys expectations, so much was it damped by their connection with the young Arab, of whom she had caught a glimpse from her window. She talked very gravdy to Emmy on the subject of "evil communications," &c. And the simple mild declared she wanted no companior but her mother, but that she must always love this one, because she had said she would.

So the little maiden criel herself to sleep that night, and the poor mother sat late over her dying fire, filed with more anxious thoughts than al the care and toil of the last ten year had given her. Emmy was but twelve years old, and

troubles sit lightly at that age ; so she went about much as usual, thinking little of her mother's grave warning, except when, after telling her of some walk or talk with Pak, she saw the anxious shade come over her brow.

On this present evening poor Emmy was full of admiration of her hero, who had acted in so noble a way ; and while she shrunk very much from telling her mother, whose lack of sympathy as to the late adventure she foresaw, yet she felt it must be done. So she gave a glowing description of Pak's prowess and oratory ; and as her mother watched her bright eager face and her eyes flashing in the fire-light, she could not but admire her little daughter, and feel for the moment almost carried away by the child's enthusiasm. But then came before her the wild ragged figure she had seen from the win-

dow that summer day, and a look of pain came into the calm face.

“Why, Emmy, my child,” she said, “I should think you bewitched, if I were superstitious, to make a hero out of the ragged piece of goods I saw with you that apple day. Do you know, I wish the apples had been all left rolling in the mud, or had gone to feast the tag-rags. What would your poor father have said, had he lived to see his little Emmy taking up with the scum of the street in this way?”

“O mother, how cruel you are!” exclaimed the poor child, her excitement having been instantly changed into a sobbing fit. “You don’t know how noble and clever he is; he has taught me more than ever I learnt at school, and has made me think of all sorts of wonderful things that I never dreamt of before.”



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Here her sobs were too much for her, and she laid her head down in her mother's lap to have her cry out. It did seem hard that, after her glowing account, and her half-hope that Pak's noble deeds were winning her mother's admiration, she should be so cruel as to call him "the scum of the street." And this from one who was always so good and kind, and whom she so thoroughly loved. But then she loved him too ; so what could she do ?

It was the little maiden's first difficulty ; and as she lay there against her mother's knee, her tears having ceased at last, and her great eyes gazing dreamily into the fire, it first struck her that it was a weary world. The mother was gently putting back the curls from the wet cheeks, and looking lovingly on the little flower at her feet, all the prettier for this April shower.

There they sat on in silence, till the blazing logs had turned to white ashes, and a bright spot in the crimson curtain showed the "parish lantern" without. Then with a little shiver Emmy got up, gave her mother a hug, and went off to bed, to sleep undisturbed by the memory of even this day's occurrences.

Mrs. Benson sat on, regardless of the cold, thinking what she ought to do for her fatherless girl.

O how she now missed that clear head and ready judgment on which, in the difficulties of her younger life, she had relied ! But Mrs. Benson, though she might not be an especially wise woman, was a thoroughly good one ; and to simple good people often comes that which wise people attain with more difficulty, and grasp with less firmness. So after thinking long and praying earnestly, in the solitude of her

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little kitchen, she seemed to see things better at last. It came over her that it would be best to leave this matter alone ; that it was possible this friendship of Emmy's might, in some mysterious way, be for her good. At any rate, so far it had done her no harm, for she was more bright and affectionate than ever, and certainly of late had spoken of things which, for so young a child, had struck her mother as surprising. For the rest, she must trust and watch ; she could not believe that any harm would be allowed to come near her darling without some warning being given to herself.

A happy tranquil feeling came down on her troubled mind, when she had arrived at this conclusion. The calm peaceful moon was silvering the white clouds above and the still stream beneath. It was a scene to make the doubting trustful ;

and it made the trustful certain. "No harm, no harm," was "borne in" upon her mind; and so, with a thankful heart, she stole softly upstairs, and fell asleep by the side of her treasure.





## CHAPTER III.

### PARADISE-PLACE.



N the rise between the town and Overton, before the villa district begun, a narrow lane led up on the right of the main-road to the second in height of the grassy slopes which formed the south cliff. The banks of the lane were deep, and wholly untrimmed by any highway surveyor. In consequence, the straggling growth of thorn, and maple, and wild clematis, had in some parts bowered over at the top, and the lines of limestone strata in the banks reflected from their moist portions a weird and uncertain light. Tradition connected this lane with various not al-

together "canny" events; the earliest of these being the rough doings of a certain piratical "Beardy," who was supposed, in some unnamed "short hours" of date, to have dwelt in a castle-like heap of rocks on the cliff-terrace. In accordance with numerous precedents in various parts of the country, this sunken road was known as "Cut-throat-lane." The more polished, however, of the Nether- and Overtonians, shrinking from so ill-sounding an appellation, knew it as Southcliff-lane; and as such it will appear in the ensuing narrative.

As soon as the said lane emerges from the defile, and the traveller finds himself on the corner of the cliff-terrace, he sees to the right an enclosure, containing a ruinous cabbage-garden, and a row of three very uninviting brick cottages, built city-fashion, under one roof. This had been

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in simpler times the coast-guard station ; but was now deserted for a better building, and a more commodious position, nearer the beach, and under the north cliff. The abandoned station followed another precedent, amply established in the naming of any unusually dreary and forlorn blocks of houses, and was known as "Paradise-place." It was now let by the Government for cottages, of which laundresses were the usual tenants.

The farthest of these from the lane, and most advanced towards the sea, was inhabited by Mrs. Podger, a jolly Somersetshire widow, of the vocation just mentioned. Her husband had been a tailor, who had in some season of distress migrated from the cloth districts of that county, to seek his better fortune at Netherton. He had obtained the contract to clothe the coastguard ; and so, when his



last button-hole was overcast, Podger *veuve* had been put, on easy terms, into No. 3 Paradise-place. There she found a house with more rooms than she and her family, and even her business, stood in need of; and so, after some little delay, she at last faced the chaff of the neighbours, and made the rhyme of "Podger" and "lodger" represent a fact.

The person who answered Mrs. Podger's notice, which the captain of the coastguard had written for her, and she had attached with pins to a gate-post at the corner where the lane met the high-road, was no other than our former acquaintance, "Tiffy."

At his first appearance, he is reported to have sent the good lady's arms instantly into the "akimbo" position, and her feet to that particular distance from each other, the combined effect of which posture is as

much as to say very decisively, "You don't enter here." But the strange figure is said to have produced something from its pockets, after the exhibition of which Mrs. Podger was immediately seen to wipe the dust from a chair with her apron. And the result was, then and there, that the applicant was appointed to the office to which he aspired ; and was installed, bag and baggage, in the ample garret of No. 3.

Among that bag and baggage were some curious and some mysterious things. From the occurrence of two or three telescopes, certain well-soiled mahogany boxes, brass-bound, were interpreted by the Nether-tonians to contain "sextants, and such-like." It is true, that no two characters could well be more different than the new lodger was from a seafaring man. But it evidently appeared that the poor gentle-

man was somewhat off his head ; and who could tell how much difference that might have made ?

To all Mrs. Podger's inquiries, "What name shall I say, sir?" he muttered something about "the scientific line."

"Do sim t' I," she said one day to Captain Davis of the coastguard, "that the gen'l'man's bin furr'd off of a rayilway train."

"Well, no, mum," replied the Captain ; "I've known many in this line and that, and I tried it on that way ; it might be some new trade, or some old one called by these new proprietary names ; but I couldn't hit it anyhow. But I have my thoughts, mum, I have my thoughts."

"And, making so bold, what be um, sir?"

"Well, you see, we seamen always call the Equator the line,—that, I mean, as you couldn't go to the Indies in the good old

sailing - days without crossing ; and my notion is that he's been there, where, mum, the sun blazes down right straight over the top of your head, and he's gotten a sun-stroke, a *cul-de-sac*, as the Musseers used to say."

"Maybe, sir," replied the widow ; "you scolards be always so turble clever. But do ee ple-ase to tell I, being as how he won't give no ne-ame, what be I to call un?"

The Captain tightened with his finger the tobacco in the bowl of his pipe, replaced that pipe in his mouth, drew a long whiff, and gazed out to sea for nearly a minute, while Mrs. Podger was soaping some linen on the edge of her tub.

At last he suddenly exclaimed, "I have it, mum ; I have it all, as pat as if I were his godfather. Scientific, did you say, mum? That's how I'll get it, mum. There

was a poor messmate of mine, whose name was Stephen,—Stephen what, I suppose I never knew, or took care to forget; but to his last day, we always called him Tiffy. Now, mum, though scientific is not Stephen, Tiffy is Tiffy, and it's in 'em both. So suppose we call this queer chap 'Tiffy.'

Drowning folks catch at straws. A lodger without a name would never do, and no name could be got out of the owner; so "Tiffy" from that time has been his name. When he first heard of it, announced by the good woman in a floundering oration of her best Doric, he seemed rather pleased than not; why, did not appear. But it might have been because his letters, which he always fetched from the post-office, were addressed J. T.; and it may have pleased him that his assumed initials suited his Netherton nickname.

Various were the surmises of those not in the secret. Those who wished to ignore a mystery, or to be polite to him, called him Mr. Tiffin ; but it wouldn't go down ; the Netherton people and, above all, the Netherton boys would have nothing but Tiffy.

Tiffy's den—the “Paradiso Tifi,” as he loved to call it—was as curious a place as could be found within the four seas. The capabilities were not great, to begin with. Perhaps no room that could be mentioned is less interesting than the top story of a mean brick-built cottage. Nor was this any exception to the general rule. First of all, a stair without a case led up to the level without a landing. Then, the very slender rafters were simply underdrawn and whitewashed. The former tenant, for his coastguarding purposes, had been provided with two windows looking

west, straight out to sea, and one looking south, commanding the grassy terrace and the beach beneath. Sea and sky there was enough, and this had captivated the eye of "Mr. Tiffin" when in search of a lodging. He had, before many days were over, called in the help of a carpenter to fix a telescope at the south window with the minutest accuracy ; the worthy joiner, and the whole Podger lot, wondering where the gentleman's wits were gone, that he didn't keep his glass movable, so as to point it at his object, like other people.

By the time the room was quite in order, it was filled on every available bit of floor, as well as on chairs and tables, with all manner of scientific apparatus, telling rather of the past than of the present ; for it would have puzzled a Dol-lond to have put one-half of the instruments to any use. In the nearest corner,



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where the roof sloped to within less than four feet of the floor, was the wooden stump-bedstead; and near the fireplace stood the only arm-chair, rush-bottomed like the rest, and attended upon by an old round three-clawed table. This, of whatever wood it had originally been made, was now polished brown and bright with use. One thing was remarkable: that every article in the room, as well as the room itself, was scrupulously clean, and, as far as such a *multum in parvo* would allow, set square and neat. Another thing to be noted was, that Mrs. Podger's cat soon showed her preference for the quiet studious fireside up-stairs over the bustling and, if such a word may be coined, *sudious* one below.

The tenancy of the Paradiso Tifi had another noticeable feature. In constant companionship with the hermit of the

upper chamber was to be seen a youthful figure, whose accessories were strangely in contrast with the spick-and-span order of the room. It was, in fact, none other than that of the before-mentioned hero of the brick-field and the apple-basket. How it came here no one seemed to know; but it is to be presumed that the resolute Mrs. Podger had not tolerated Pak's bare feet upon her stair without a further dose of persuasive from the braided pocket of the scientific cloak.

Of the junior members of the Podgery it is hardly to be imagined that they were so entirely under the maternal word of command as to abstain from chaffing such an object. This, however, with certain occasional exceptions, they fairly did; in fact, the general toleration and even approval of Pak could be accounted for only on the hypothesis that the lad had in

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some way made himself acceptable to them.

A strange youth this ; captivating young ladies down in the town ; somehow found necessary to the queer shy philosopher of Paradise-place ; welcome, even in rags and dirt, to the widow professor of clean linen ; and popular on his own account with the rough lot who called that widow mother. As to the account to be given of his original connection with the philosopher, no one seemed to know anything about it. The two had turned up at Netherton about the same time ; but no narrative of their arrival was extant. The inference generally drawn was, that they had travelled thither in some different garb from that in which they now appeared,—coming, say, by a night-train, and, for some reason unknown, changing their apparel afterwards. Still,

even thus the present status of the two seemed hardly, on any ordinary human probabilities, accounted for. Had the elder one any control over the younger? If so, how can we suppose that he would have consigned his *protégé* to dirt and rags? Or was this otherwise? Then if so, was it likely that a bright clever boy would have voluntarily endured the change to his present degraded position? Anyhow, it was a stiff puzzle; and many a tea-table in Netherton, and even in Over-ton, had witnessed its discussion.

“Pak,” the name by which the said ragged boy was known, represented a longer appellation, which the philosopher seemed to have brought with him. It was, in fact, of his own invention, and originated with the circumstances, whatever those were, which had brought the pair to Netherton. Other coincidences

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may have combined to suggest the name ; but certain it is that the boy's indomitable pluck, and habitual insensibility to privation and pain, reminded his friend of that tribe of animals endowed with an impenetrable hide, and led him to choose for the boy, out of his scientific vocabulary, the sobriquet of " Pachyderm"—the thick-skinned.

And well, indeed, did he deserve it. There seemed to be no danger into which he could not cast himself, and none out of which he did not come unscathed. Many a small boy had owed to him his escape from bullying at the hands of the town-roughs. And even by those who had at first begun to persecute this interfering stranger, he was now held in respect. For one day, when a poor little urchin of their own order had fallen from the end of the jetty into the sea, Pak,

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without a moment's hesitation, had taken a "header" after him, and, holding him above water with one hand, had swum with the other till a boat took them in. On that occasion he had been borne, dripping as he was, on the shoulders of a lot of hurraing young scamps, up Quay-street and through Evenborough, to the amazement of his scientific friend, who met the noisy procession on his daily route to the post-office. But more is to be said about this anomalous creature, as he coexisted with the philosopher in the Paradiso Tifi.

At the back of the house, accessible from the lane through the garden, might be seen a small lean-to shed, originally built for coals. But coals enough for a coastguard family were not coals enough for the consumption required in Mrs. Podger's business ; so she had got a much

larger lean-to roof attached to the end gable of the house under the south window, and the little shed was dis-used.

Here then, partly the boy's own clever hands, and partly those of his eccentric friend, aided by Podger volunteers, had prepared him a sort of kennel, where, on a shake-down of soft straw, he turned in, when he did turn in, of nights. As to food, he was not seldom to be seen sharing the tea-table in the garret, and even sometimes sitting as an accepted guest in Mrs. Podger's chimney-corner ; but with these exceptions, his eating seemed to be of a piece with his other habits, and to own no regular course. A certain large hole in the wall, behind the straw-pallet in the shed, commonly held a loaf of bread, and sometimes a wedge of cheese. These were replenished, as often as need



required, from the town ; and some ingenuity had been shown in defending the hole from dogs, cats, and small vermin, by the bottom of a wire-sieve being hung on a nail over the hole, and tied by a string to another nail below. This was Pak's only pantry, and the pump his only cellar. A curious and characteristic life ; hardly one which could be meant to last ; hardly a decadence simply from something better ; but perhaps a weird parenthesis—a trial necessitated by some contingency, and leading on to something other than itself ; who knew ? The philosopher, perhaps ; and he so far gave sign of such cognisance, in that he had named Pak's coal-shed "Il Purgatorio."

What passed when they were together, as it baffled all else to say, so it went quite beyond Mrs. Podger and her family. It was the boy's habit to remain up-stairs

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quite late at night ; indeed, none knew how late ; for he retired to bed by letting himself down from the south window on the top of the larger coal-shed. Those who slept below testified to hearing what steps were to be heard at night principally about that window. But the movements were few and far between ; and as Tiffy wore soft slippers, and Pak needed none, those few were but indistinctly audible. What words were heard were wholly out of comprehension. Those who “did” the room in the morning always found the desk near the fixed telescope locked. Once only had a scrap of paper covered with figures been picked up on the floor, and carried off triumphantly by Amy Podger, who acted as house-servant to her mother. By her it was duly exhibited to her friend Captain Davis, who deposed to having seen something like it on board ship, but

having been then as much puzzled as he was now. It seemed to him, he said, that whatever the figures were, they as put 'em down hadn't had any eddication in rethmatic, or else they'd have known better than to begin their rows of figures with *noughts*; and he added :

“In my opinion, mum, it's a poor fond thing; for that as begins wi' nothing, why, we all know it must end i' nothing; and then, mum, what's it wuth?”

Still, whatever it was that they did, it seemed that “eddcation” of some sort was at the bottom of it; for the boy knew lots of things that Podgerdom did not know, and a young Podger who was sneaking under the coal-shed one bright night deposed to having heard something about *double stars*!

Not the least unaccountable circum-

stance about the strange pair was, that they had never been known to enter church or meeting.

“What do ’em worship when they do sahey they prahyers, I wonder?” said Mrs. Podger one Sunday morning.

“Why, the stars, mother, I suppose,” answered Amy, who was just wishing the reflection of her best bonnet good-bye as she turned from the looking-glass over the mantelpiece.

“Did ee ever hear ’em prahying?” asked her mother.

“Can’t say as ever I did; but what the wonder makes ’em bide at that winder half the night, and it open as wide as a death o’ cold? Wasn’t that just what Dan’ll did, when he prayed in spite of the Parlyment, cause he seed Juslm in the distance?”

“Well blundered, Amy!” cried Tom,

a big youth from the Overton national school. "Then I suppose you think they're Jews?"

"That I knows they bean't," rejoined the widow; "for Jews don't eat no poke; an' I know that when they killed their pig next door, it fed 'em both for a month, in and out."

"Then they be Turks, or else herry-ticks," said Amy; "for all as bean't Christians be one or t'other."

"Deeper and deeper," cried Tom triumphantly.

"Thee hould thy tongue," said the mother.—"Amy, why do'sn't thee speak up to 'un? For all 's l'arning, he can't get-up a shirt: tell 'n that."

"Law, mother, where's the use o' 't? He don't care for getting-up o' shirts, not he; an' I don't care for what he can do, that's as good; and so there's an end

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o' 't. There's tenor bell, an' I shall be late, an paason 'll noisee."

And so she dashed out, leaving peace behind her.





## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SCHOOL.

**T**HE grammar-school of Netherton-on-Sea dated from the days of the town's former and long-past importance. In the far-away reign of King Edward VI., Netherton contained about fifteen hundred inhabitants; and ranked as a considerable country town. In those days, the "late perpendicular" church, built by the grateful Duke of Richmond when he had become Henry VII., was hardly yet mossed over. One Marmaduke Stubbs, who had somehow made his way to London and risen there to aldermanic dignity, had, out of his affluence, bought the property abutting on the



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west side of the churchyard, and built and endowed (as endowments then were) a grammar-school for the youth of Nether-ton and the neighbouring Overton ; founding at the same time a scholarship at Quadham College, Oxford, to be held first by his own kin, and, failing such, at the appointment of the head-master. Having made these and other benefactions to his native place, he bequeathed his body to the chancel, where, with that of Dorothy his wife, it reposes under a poorly-executed late brass.

The old school-house is a building of venerable gray stone, gorgeous with its secular lichens, and facing on the churchyard with three flat-headed stone-mullioned windows, high above the ground. The space in the façade beneath the windows is protected by a colonnade covered with lead, beneath which is an

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arched door, serving for the principal entrance. This colonnade is supported by stone pillars of the Doric order; and the whole paved space in front is enclosed with a wall, opening on the churchyard by an old-fashioned iron gate, flanked by two pillars of the period, capped with balls of stone.

The foundation was free to boys of the two townships; and such as availed themselves of this privilege, from bearing the name of "poor scholars" in the foundation deed, were always known as "the scholars." When the new college was built for the sons of the Netherton aristocracy, the distinctive name for *its* pupils became "the collegers;" and many a feud and rivalry, in and beyond cricket and football, existed between the two sets, the "scholars" and the "collegers."

The present head-master, Dr. Digam,

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had been a "double-first" in his time, and was keeping up well the character of the school. In spite of the ebb-tide of public opinion, and the adverse reports of Commissions, it may be doubted whether education can be much better provided for the tradesman-class in country towns than by these old grammar-schools, when the head - master is efficient. There were plenty in Netherton, it is true, and among them the "cocky" editors of the local journals, who were ready enough to rail at their Alma Mater, and turn against her the little wit which she had contrived to awaken within them ; but the proof of the school was in the pupils ; and now, for some years, the Doctor had contrived to turn out capital scholars at the universities, capital professional men in the law and medicine, capital men of business in the Netherton and other counting-houses.

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So that, however the new institution might gain favour from “villadom,” it was not likely to supplant the old grammar-school, with its Latin verses, and its speech-day, and its old statutable “*coram omnibus vapulet*,” in the esteem of the resident citizens of Netherton. Hither the worthy vicar, Mr. Bythesea, had in his youth resorted daily from his father’s fish-shop, and having got the scholarship, had afterwards become Fellow of Quadham, and had taken, as a college living, the incumbency of his native town. Here the town physician, Dr. Resp, had won laurels in his time; and the present worthy mayor, Mr. Snixon, had taken the unusual step of passing from the captaincy of the school to serve at his uncle’s, the draper’s, counter. No wonder such a school should hold its head high in the town, and regard both its reputation and its numbers as perfectly secure

from "Even-knole (or as the scholars, after a joke of the Doctor's, were fond of calling it, "Even-now") College Limited," and from its very noisy, and not very scrupulous advocates, the *Netherton Observer* and the *Netherton Gazette*.

A school depends for its present character, whatever may be its historical "goodwill," on the staff who rule it.

The head-master was a little thin man, with pale, well-chiselled features, and straight dark hair. There was a notable marble smoothness in his high forehead, beneath which looked out a pair of sparkling dark-hazel eyes. His voice was full and melodious; when used musically it was an exceedingly fine tenor. He had begun university life as a chorister at Christ Church, and had the reputation of being the best musician in Netherton. In speaking, his tones were clear, and his

style was incisive. All his sentences were remarkably well turned and balanced. He always begun his addresses to his boys with "Gentlemen;" and the rest was in keeping. He spoke to them in a kind of lofty and somewhat euphuistic oratory, and always assumed the highest standard of truth and honour as prevailing among them.

In punishment he rose to something like majesty; and no boy was ever known, who did not care more for the Doctor's severity of word and manner than for the stinging of the birch-buds. The latter was a thing to be manfully endured, and cost only the bite of a lip, or the mark of the nails in the palm of the hand; but the other pierced to the very soul. Many, who are now great stalwart men, can remember that even the Doctor's condescension, and the measured ring of his joke,

used to unnerve them so completely, that what silly answer they would make seemed entirely beyond their own control.

To his under masters, he was, before the boys, and indeed, when more than one of them were present, courteous, and even deferential; the inexperienced would imagine that the "sub" led the way in talk, and the Doctor followed. But a little experience showed that the Doctor's lead was never abandoned, nor was the sub's freedom real; and as those who conceal most usually reveal most, the sixth-form boys often used to watch with delight the modulations of the Doctor's voice, and the peculiar leer of his eye, prophetic of far other tones and looks when he and his interlocutor should be alone. "My, won't Timins catch it!" was sometimes heard, when all seemed smoothest and most friendly. But with all this, Dr. Digam



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was a thoroughly generous-hearted and kind man. The dullest boy in the school (and ostensibly he hated dull boys), when in trouble, ever found in him an unwearied protector and a self-denying friend. Hardly a week passed but some of his former under masters or scholars, struggling up and down in the world, received help from his liberal hand. He was an illustration of what is often found true, and the index to a good many more truths,—that some men are too good to be perfect. Had Dr. Digam had less heart, he would have been a better schoolmaster; had he not been a schoolmaster, he would have been a philanthropist. But the two crossed one another, and turned the mixture sour.

Mr. Timins, the second master, was considerably over the average size of men, both in breadth and length. With clothes and cheeks well filled, and a great scarcity

of colour in his complexion, he belonged to that class of human beings in whose composition not the dust of the earth seems to have been used, but, as a Cornish man would say, "Carclaze clay," or, as other men might suggest, mashed potatoes. One word only would express his physical and spiritual characteristics, and that word is, "milk." He was a huge gentle creature, who could bowl over, and sometimes, in his gawky frolic, did bowl over, the biggest boy in the school with a mere push of his hand; and this physical superiority insured him the objective respect of the school, while his unvarying kindness to little and big was a warrant for his popularity.

His teaching was always up to a certain respectable mark, and that average was almost without exception reached by the fifth form, his especial care; so that

the Doctor could pretty accurately calculate on the raw material sent up into the sixth.

As might be expected, his manner towards his class was usually placid and kind. He was fond of deviating into little illustrations and bits of collateral history, with a decided leaning to such as verged on the quietly humorous.

Now and then the mass of calm was deeply stirred. On one occasion the class were reading the grand thunderstorm passage in the first Georgic,—

“Ipse Pater, mediâ nimborum in nocte, coruscâ  
Fulmina molitur dextrâ,” &c.,—

Deep in the midnight of the tempest clouds,  
Th’ Almighty Father with His own right hand  
Forges the thunder,—

when he saw two fellows giggling. To the utter amazement of all, he called out, in a voice half an octave below his usual tone, “Good heavens, boys! don’t you know you are in the presence of God?”

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After such a description, none will be surprised to hear that Mr. Timins, with the hardest labour, maintained a widowed mother and two sisters, who lived with him, filling up the scanty chinks of his leisure from school-work by writing notices of books in magazines and reviews.

There hardly could be a greater contrast to Mr. Timins than was furnished by the mathematical master, Mr. Heckswy. He was a small wiry person, with jet-black hair and eyebrows, and an anxious restless look, as if he never slept. It was reported that his queer-sounding name had once been otherwise spelt,—in fact, that it was of foreign origin, and had originally terminated with that odd combination of *c* and *z* and *w* and *y* which an English mouth can enounce only by sneezing. Thus the coal-black hair and eyes would be also accounted for. It was again by

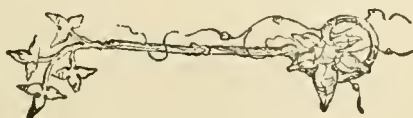
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others viewed as an odd coincidence that the name, especially as pronounced by the lower orders, had an unmistakable relation to the mystic letters so much used in algebraic processes; and a very common idea among the boys was, that Mr. Heckswy had been so named from his connection with  $x$ 's and  $y$ 's. Another "persuasion" assigned to him some romantic origin and position in his ante-Nethertonian existence. As usual, both parties were right, and both were wrong, in these suppositions. At all events, while Mr. Heckswy betrayed in his talk no token of a foreign origin, on the other side might be ranged the fact of his familiarity with the use and the literature of modern languages.

In his zeal for all branches of mathematical science, Mr. Heckswy was an enthusiast. Nor was his enthusiasm bounded

by these limits. The study of history, especially with reference to the development of liberty, was his unending delight; and by his quick and restless discourse, he was evermore bringing into notice his far-reaching views and fervid aspirations.

The boys were very like those of any other grammar-school—no better, and certainly no worse; for the high bearing and unreserved confidence of Dr. Digam had spread its influence down to the smallest urchin who had been a month in the school. The adage, “Boys *is* boys,” was abundantly exemplified at Netherton; but the Doctor’s assumption in addressing them was well borne out. No Nether-tonian could say that it was a common thing to doubt the word of a “scholar.”





## CHAPTER V.

“BONES.”

**MAY** had come round, with its delights and its disappointments. Not the traditional May to which imagination clings, all sunshine and poetry; but a month with many days in it to make glad the heart of man, despite the cold and cloudy intervals which separated them.

Happily for Pak and Emmy, a certain Saturday in this month was one of those perfect spring days, which make an ordinary holiday rank among the bright events of life. Emmy's feet seemed scarcely to feel the ground as she tripped along,



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basket on arm, through the sunny town to her trysting-place. Stolen waters are sweet; but this tryst was sweet without being stolen. The afternoon's outing was Mrs. Benson's own arrangement. Emmy's cheeks were looking pale for want of country walks; and her mother was busy now, and could not spare the time to take her out. So when there was a talk of going to get flowers with Pak, and the little maid naïvely insinuated that he had learnt their names and would teach her, her mother told her to put on her things, packed up in the aforesaid basket the favourite dripping-cake which she, “careful soul,” had with prophetic instinct made, arranged, with an old newspaper, a soft bed for a bottle of milk beside it, and sent Emmy off to have her “tea” on the cliffs.

The place of meeting was the entrance

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of South Cliff-lane. For somehow Pak was beginning to feel out of place in walking through the streets with her in his ragged clothes; and it may be that the bright spring weather had some share in bringing this about. However this might be, he had appointed to meet her here; and here waiting for her she found him. He had done what he could to get himself up for the occasion; had tugged away with a comb, or with something, at his tangled hair to reduce it into order, and had scrubbed his comely face at his pump till it glowed rosy red. As for his garments, they were but fragmentary, do what he would; but for all that Emmy looked at him with undisguised pleasure when she came upon him at the turning of the road. Certain little courtesies passed as they went up the bowery lane, under the banks gay with stellaria, campion, and hyacinth.

Pak had soon to climb up their steep sides to gather for his companion the cunning blue-bells, which were hanging from their curving stems most provokingly just among the thorny bushes, defiant of any but scratch-proof hands.

Emmy was as merry as a bird, and called laughingly to him to leave the rest of the flowers for next time, and come and give her a lesson about their names.

“ Now what do you call this pretty little blue flower, please, master?” she said, looking up at him with a roguish smile.

“ That,” said he, “ is Germander Speedwell; rather a long name, isn’t it?”

“ Long enough, and ugly too. I shall call it Bird’s-eye, as I did before; and I suppose you will call this something just as ugly?” holding up another paler blue flower, of which she had a large sprinkling in her nosegay.

“Yes,” said he, with a comical twinkle in his eyes; “that, my fair scholar, is by the wise known as *Myosotis Palustris*.”

“Then,” laughed out Emmy, “your fair scholar must be among the fools, for she won’t learn any more such frightful long words. If you had called it by its own pretty name, she would have given you some for your coat.”

She held up a tempting little bunch, which he tried rather awkwardly to fix in his ragged button-hole, saying they should be always forget-me-nots to him; upon which Emmy pinned it in for him securely, and then asked him to tell her something about flowers which she could understand. And a very attentive interested listener she became as he explained to her, strange to say, how that plants are divided into classes and families, as human beings are; stopping now and then to pull to pieces

some gay martyr to science, to show her the distinctive parts.

Most improbable all this to pass between a ragged Arab of the streets and a little humble schoolgirl: but so it was; and after all there is but one limit to the improbability. Given the strange lad, love would any day provide the listener.

And so they loitered through the shaded lane, till the flecks of sunlight became pools, and the pools ran into a shadowless expanse. They were on the corner of the grassy terrace, close upon Mrs. Podger's domain; and they paused to look back upon the busy town, which seemed to sleep peacefully under its brooding smoke, which lay over it in a soft blue haze, backed by the undulating hills.

“I always fancy,” said Emmy, “that there is a hazy light and an idle feel about

Saturday afternoons, as if all the world were having a holiday."

"And yet," said Pak, "it's just the most busy of all times to many folks. Isn't it odd to think what a bustle there really is down in that sleepy-looking town?"

"Yes; and our scrap of a cottage must be there somewhere, and mother with her dress tucked up cleaning the kitchen, and making everything bright for to-morrow."

Here her companion seemed to be contemplating some object far out at sea; for he turned his head from the town, at which both had been looking, and with it, apparently, his attention likewise. At last, in somewhat of an altered tone, he said, turning only half towards Emmy and measuring his words as if they each cost him an effort, "And why should things be bright to-morrow?"

“Why? You must be making fun, Pak. Why, because it’s Sunday, to be sure, and no one works; and all put on their best clothes, and we go to church and to school.”

“But suppose *I* don’t?”

“Suppose you don’t? What do you mean, Pak? You go to church somewhere, I suppose.”

“Well, I can’t say I do.”

“Then you go to chapel? Mother says we oughtn’t to speak evil of the meetingers, for there are some very good people among them.”

“Very likely, Emmy; but I’m not one of them, for I never was in a chapel in my life.”

“Then you never go anywhere of a Sunday?”

“No, not in your meaning; but in my own, I go where it’s good for me to



go, far better than if I was at church or chapel."

"And where can that be?" asked the little girl, with wondering eyes.

"Where, little woman? Why, where should it be, but to the biggest church that ever was seen, with the grandest music and the finest preacher?"

"Nonsense," said Emmy, "you mean a cathedral, such as I've heard of at Exeter; but I'm sure you don't go there, for its miles and miles off."

"No, little woman, I don't mean Exeter cathedral. That may be all very fine, but mine's finer."

"Why, then, Pak, what *do* you mean? I'm a dull little soul, and never get under your fine talk."

"Isn't there a cathedral where the vault is the blue sky, and the music the winds and waves, and the preacher He that made them?"

But this was out of Emmy's reach—above her, or, perhaps, she above it. So she looked on the ground, and she pulled to pieces one of her blue hyacinths, and said gently and slowly, “I wish so much you would come to our church. Won't you come to-morrow?”

“Come to your respectable Netherton church in these rags of mine?” he answered with rather a bitter laugh. “I must have a seat to myself, for none of the smart folks that I see fluttering along of a Sunday would sit next a shabby beggar like me.”

“Well, Pak, call yourself what names you like, God made you as well as them; and you ought to go to worship Him as well as they.”

“Maybe; but I like to worship Him in my own fashion. I can't make out what your church is all about. I have

before now listened at the door, and it all seems to me gibberish, or something like it."

Emmy's eyes filled with tears. They were sitting on a piece of moss-covered limestone, with sea and land peacefully spread below. He wondered what kept his companion silent so long. She had raised her eyes and fixed them in an earnest wistful gaze on the distant hills. At last she said, "Pak, I have been doing something, I fear, very foolish. But it has brought a thought into my head which I hadn't there before. I am going to give you my Bible, to learn for yourself. I know you haven't read it, for you have told me so; and there you will find a great deal about the sea and the stars, and the animals and the flowers, and all that you are so fond of; and there you will find all about our worship, that seems

such gibberish to you, and a great many beautiful and blessed things that I can't explain, and never could. You must come and have tea with us to - morrow, and then you can take it away with you. Will you have it, and read it, Pak?”

“Yes,” he replied. It was all he could say just then. The true little woman's tears, and her unexpected eager tone, had stirred within him that which forbids words.

So no more was said. They got up, and, turning away from the terrace, went off to the right, past the outer fences of Podgerdom, seaward, to the edge of the cliff, where a narrow footpath led up to its highest point. When at last that summit was gained, they seated themselves on the brink, with their feet hanging over it. The rock was not quite precipitous, but had little juttings-out of limestone here

and there, with stunted bushes or tufts of the white *Cochlearia* clinging to them. It might have been possible to scale its face by means of these rocky projections.

The Netherton chimes were playing "The last rose of summer" as the two seated themselves on the top; a sign that it was six o'clock, and tea-time. So Emmy began with great delight to spread the little white cloth in which her cake was wrapped on the close-nibbled turf at her side, and set thereon the dripping-cake and the bottle of milk, together with two small mugs, to which Pak added, with much mock ceremony, his clasp-knife, venerable and much battered, to do the carving. The mistress of the table then emptied the milk into the mugs, and filled her bottle with her choice bouquet of wild-flowers. All being ready, she sum-

moned her companion, who had started up and was peering about over the face of the cliff. As he obeyed her summons he still looked back over his shoulder to the spot he had left.

“I thought I heard a moaning sound half-way down the cliff yonder ; but I can’t see anything for all my peering, so it must have been my fancy. Why, what a fairy feast you have got for me!” he said, throwing himself down by the side of the extempore tea-table.

As they enjoyed their meal, “ This reminds me,” said Pak, “ of the story of Beauty and the Beast which I told you the other day. I make a first-rate Beast with my shaggy and tangled mane. Only think, if I should turn out a prince in disguise, wouldn’t that be a lark ?”

“ You may turn out a prince if you like,” said Emmy ; “ but you are not a

bit like the beast you described when you told me the story. He had a horrid gruff voice, and you speak more pleasantly than anyone I ever heard. I wonder sometimes, Pak, how you come to look and speak so differently from those rough boys you call companions. You are as unlike them as can be, for all your ragged clothes."

Pak smiled pleasantly, for Emmy's praise tickled him. Then he looked out for an instant to sea, and said with a puzzled air :

"I have often wondered about the same matter myself, Emmy ; for what you say is quite true. I am different ; I feel it ; yet I can't for the life of me think why. I daresay Tiffy's teaching has something to do with it ; for he is every inch a gentleman, I'm sure, for all his queer ways."



“How did you come to know him? You never told me that.”

“Well, I hardly know myself. It was a long time ago, when I was quite a little chap. The first I remember of him was meeting him out in the wood one day when I was toddling about by myself, at the time I lived in the country with poor Sally and her husband, as I once told you.”

“Ah, Sally was kind to you when you were a baby-boy. But she wasn't your mother, was she?”

“O no, she was no relation. I suppose she took pity on me when I was a poor little mortal not able to help myself. I don't know where she found me—under the hedge, perhaps: she always shook her head when I asked her. But she was very good to me, and tried to prevent her tipsy husband from knocking me about;

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but it was no good : he used to beat her too, if she tried to keep him off me. So at last I couldn't stand it any longer ; and after he had stripped me and thrashed me till I was sore all over, I ran away one moonlight night just before bedtime."

"O yes ; and you went all through the dark wood, like a brave little fellow as you were, and across the lonely fields, you told me ; and it was like a fairy-story."

"Then old Tiffy must have been my good sprite ; for I should have slept my last nap under the hedge that cold winter morning if he hadn't spied me out, and made me trudge along by his side to the town some miles off. I have had a queer life of it since then ; but he has always stood my friend, so I've good cause to be fond of him, haven't I ? and to stick to him, whatever may turn up."

“Yes, you have indeed; and I was so proud of you when you fought for him that day on No-man’s Land.”

“Hark !” said Pak suddenly, “there’s that moaning sound again down the cliff. What can it be ?”

He sprang to his feet, and Emmy to hers, as a still more piteous whine came up from below.

“It must be a poor dog,” said Pak ; “he must have been pitched over the cliff by some rascal or other, and has stuck half-way. I’ll climb down and look after the poor little beggar.”

“O, but you can’t here, it’s too steep ; it would make you giddy to try. Let us make haste round to the beach ; perhaps he’s near the bottom.”

“No, he isn’t half-way down ; I know by the sound. You stay and guard the drop of milk and crust we’ve left, while

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I fetch him up. He'll be starving, you may depend."

With a beating heart she did as she was told, placing herself so as likewise to watch Pak's descent as far as she could. It required a steady head to make that descent in safety; for the cliff in that part was very high and steep, and only scalable by means of the bushy projections we have described. Pak took a sidelong course, guiding himself by the sound, as he dared not look down at first.

It was a longer journey than he had anticipated; but on becoming sensible of his approach, as he kept whistling and encouraging the poor creature, it set up a continual yelping and howling, as if to guide him better. And there was gradually a little less of the pitiful, and a tinge of hopefulness, about the sounds as he

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drew nearer them, which cheered him, in his turn, on his way. At last they were almost close; and guessing that doggie must be near a clump of thick bushes which he had marked from the top as his probable hiding-place, Pak ventured to look downwards. And there sure enough, close under his feet, was as miserable a specimen of a living creature as you could well imagine. It was a Scotch terrier, with a pretty face of its own, for all its pinched and piteous look. Its hair may once have been curly and becoming; but now, owing to a night's exposure to rain and wind, it was draggled and limp. The poor thing was all over of a tremble from faintness, fear, and delight, and tried to prove the latter feeling by wagging his skinny little apology for a tail. Pak posed himself securely against the base of the rock, setting his feet firmly among the

bushes, and then took up the poor little wretch most tenderly, patted it, and talked to it cheeringly.

When he had comforted and warmed it a little, he took off his own ragged coat, stowed away Emmy's forget-me-nots in a safer place, and, by means of his pin and the buttons, imprisoned master doggie in the same. He then flung his burden on his back, securing it by tying the sleeves in front, and cautiously began the ascent.

This was easier than the going down, as he could now see and choose his way; and before long he and his bundle were safe at the top of the cliff.

Emmy, who had been watching him with the greatest anxiety, was of course overcome with delight. She kissed Pak and the dog too, and could hardly keep

back tears of gratitude at having him safe again.

Then, seeing he was no worse for his exploit, she devoted herself to the dog. What remained of their meal was entirely at his service. They made him, nothing loth, drink the nice milk and eat the soft crust Emmy had been soaking for him. After a bit he stopped shaking, and, nestling himself round in Emmy's lap, went fast asleep. His new protectors tried to curl his lank locks, which were of very fine texture, and a pretty dark gray in colour; and while doing so, they speculated as to his probable history, and wondered what could be his name.

“He belongs to us now, anyhow,” said Pak; “for whoever had him before wanted to be rid of him, else they wouldn't have starved him first and thrown him down there after.”



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“Yes; and I don’t think it’s much use trying to guess his former name, for even if we should hit it, it would remind him of his cruel master and all he had suffered; so let’s find out quite a new one he never had before.”

“All right; and I have a good thought. Suppose we call him ‘Bones’!”

Emmy laughed such a merry peal at this queer name, that poor Bones stirred in his sleep, and gave a lazy wag with his tail, by way, as it seemed, of assent to the proposal. And truly you could think of little else than his name in looking at him just now.

Next arose the question where he should be lodged.

“I’m afraid mother mightn’t like him in her clean kitchen, though I should love to have him,” said Emmy, stroking the curly head.

“O, he’d better share my shed,” said Pak.—“There’s room enough for you and me, Bones ; and you shall have a bit out of my cupboard, old boy, and drink from my pump.”

So it was all settled. He was joint property, but was to lodge with Pak ; and very happy the two were with their new-found friend.

They sat on, talking of many things which boys and girls can talk about, watching the gulls skimming the waves with their white wings, and the fishermen’s boats, dark specks in the distance, set against the golden sea. For the sun was setting without a cloud, and sea and sky were molten into one in the glowing west.

The same thought was, perhaps, with a characteristic difference, in both minds. For in turning to go home, Pak

said, "Will you give me that book to-night, Emmy? I'll come here and see what's in it to-morrow, and do my church in that way—at all events, till I look more respectable."

So he took Emmy home, Bones trotting behind; and the two waited outside while she fetched her book. And then they parted.

Emmy's cup of bliss was full to the brim. She thought she had conquered her lover; and she found on entering her home that that was not her only victory.

When Mrs. Benson saw her bright eyes and glowing cheeks, she expressed pleasure that she had let her go, spoke more favourably of Pak than she had ever done before, wondered whether he could be induced to spend Sunday evenings with them, and even offered to contribute with

her own hands to make him more presentable.

So the little woman lay awake an hour for her gladness, and then carried it on into her dreams.





## CHAPTER VI.

### A DIFFERENCE.

**T**HERE were great exertions, this summer long, in the Paradiso and the Purgatorio. The queer boyish figure was frequently seated over a desk with compasses and T-squares; the quaint philosopher was moving backwards and forwards, eager in inspection, absolutely recusant of help; there were frequent star-lessons night by night. Something was evidently being devised, and constructed with no ordinary care. But whatever it was, it did not appear to interfere with cricket and rounders in "No-man's Land;" nor with frequent rambles

over the cliffs in company of Emmy and Bones. Those rambles were the very essence of delight, especially in the sweet airs of spring. Then first, sky and sea seemed to put on colour not borrowed from rise or set of sun—colour of their own, down in the deeps of the water, up in the heights of the ether; then, week by week, peeped the tender green things out of the rough brown earth, and the yellow bents of the grass became swamped with upbursting verdure; then first the larks hung in mid-heaven, and the sea-birds sat tranquil on the bed of the ebbing tide. And the young souls drank in beauty, drank in rest, from every sight and sound.

So went the half-holidays through spring and early summer. The walks, however, were not all enjoyment. The little girl was ever, in her quiet loving

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way, pressing her point, which Pak loved to evade, or to parry with argument in his crude boyish way.

And this continual attack and defence was not a welcome element in the young courtship. On one or two occasions it had reached a height which was hardly pleasant to remember. Emmy indeed was ever gentle, even in her importunity ; but Pak's temper was hasty, and he would not bear pressing when he was not in the humour. Now and then an angry word had fixed itself in the memory of the little girl, and rankled as she lay awake in Factory-lane. Still, for the most part, the walks were pure enjoyment ; and the lad's nightly pursuits gave him so much to impart on his side about general studies far above Emmy's reach, that it seemed almost presumption, when Emmy watched her turn, and attempted to speak to him



of something of which he, on his side, knew nothing.

It was one of those glorious days in October, when the summer seems to have returned, if the shortening light would but give it its way. The shrubby dingles of the cliff-terraces were putting on bright streaks of amber and gold, and the breeze, as it visited them, whisked away the loosened leaves in showers.

Emmy had been dilating, in her girlish way, on the glories of the blessed state to come, and had been tempting Pak's belief by many a description rather apocryphal than apocalyptical.

They had been sitting at the bottom of one of those many-tinted dingles. Pak had listened longer and more quietly than was his wont. At last he said, "Let us go to the view," meaning a point some fifty feet above them, commanding the

whole of the beach, and the town with its tower and chimneys, and the bluff mass of North Cliff beyond.

Thither they climbed, lit by the now westering sun, and casting their long shadows over the level grass of the terrace.

And that elfish Bones was routing, grubbing, whinnying with a little under moan; sometimes breaking into a tiny succession of *staccato* barks—but all for nothing—and then dashing up, tumbling over tufts and brambles, all tail and all vibration, to his master and mistress, and rewarded by a rough caress and a tumble over from Pak's hand or Emmy's little foot.

But what will the keeper say? For this time he has brought a little rabbit, and has laid it down at their feet, and is frisking around it with joy.

“O you wicked Bones, sha'n't you be ossified?”

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“ Say os-whipt, Pak, as some of your friends do.”

“ Well, now, Emmy, about that heaven of yours—will Bones go there ?”

“ O Pak, you wild fellow ! how should he ? He’s got no soul.”

“ No soul ? Why, what’s joy but the sign of a soul ?”

“ Well, I don’t understand ; the Bible doesn’t say anything about it.”

“ More shame for it, then. Here’s a book, they say, proves God’s love and justice. Why doesn’t it tell us anything about the greater part of God’s works ? Look at the poor horses : they are beaten, starved, scolded, driven about with great raw sores on them, and then shot, and cut up by the knacker ; if there’s no heaven for them, where’s God’s love, where’s God’s justice, I’d like to know ? What’s the Bible good for, if it can’t say that ?”

The little girl sat down on a tuft of grass and began to cry. Bones wriggled up whining, and licked her hands, which hid her face.

“Don’t take on, now, little sister,” said Pak, kissing the said hands, and sharing the lavish bestowals of dog’s-tongue.

It was a pretty scene : the blue sea, hundreds of feet beneath ; the bright rocks above them, gleaming in the evening sun ; and that group of three, two of them puzzled with the great world’s riddle—one doing battle with it after his fashion, the second awed and weeping under its burden, and the third offering his best to solve it by such love as it was in his power to show.

“But then, Pak, why will you talk so ? Why will you use such terrible words ?”

“My darling,” said he very tenderly, “I’m not used to your Bible; I’m used to the big sea, and the bright stars, and the joys and sufferings of the dumb creatures. Your Bible was written thousands of years ago; but these God is writing, painting, making, every day we live. Which must I believe—what you say He wrote ages ago, or what I see Him doing now?”

No answer but sobs.

“Well, then, little sister, I suppose, as mother says, we must ‘drop the subject,’ and talk about something else.”

“No, Pak, that won’t quite do. It’s a subject you and I must understand some day; we can’t drop it.”

“How do you mean, *understand some day*? I’m sure *I* shall never understand it.”

“Well, I’m a silly little girl; I suppose

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I meant, we must come to an understanding about it."

"O, that's it, is it?" said Pak; "you mean that you intend to believe the same all your life, whatever you see or hear; and that I am to promise, if we are to spend our lives together, to always believe as you do, whatever *I* see and hear—to nail my colours to the mast, as they say in the sea-battles, and never yield, sink or swim?"

As Pak said this, he slightly flushed, and drew himself up, his hands down by his side, and his fingers clenched, as in earnest emotion.

And Emmy, in her turn, rose, as by a sudden impulse, from her seat, and stifling her sobs, said, as firmly as she could,

"I mean always to believe what dear mother and Mrs. Bythesea have taught me,

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and what the Rector teaches us all, and what the Bible teaches everybody; and I know that all I see and hear will not weaken, but will strengthen my faith."

And so the two stood opposite, not like Teneriffe and Atlas, nor like two sulphur-laden clouds, but like a wayward high-headed lad, and a pious constant little girl, brought into conflict, despite their deep love, or rather by the very depth of that love; conflict on a want of man's spirit deeper than love itself.

And Bones sat on end, looking wistfully from one face to another, and now and then giving a little whine, and making a false start to go, but subsiding again when he saw no movement.

At last, Pak stepped forward and put out his hand.

"Come, Emmy, you shall believe what



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you please, so long as you will be my little wife."

But Emmy stood firm.

"Pak," she said, "you know I love you, next to dear mother, best in the world ; but there's One not in the world I love better than all, and I won't cast my lot with anyone who slights and dislikes Him."

"And I," said Pak, "mean to be free to change my belief as truth and justice require. I sha'n't be always the same ; then why am I to believe always the same ?"

"Yes, you will be always the same," said Emmy, now in her turn flushing up, and speaking with a firm, and it might almost seem an inspired tone, and borrowing language beyond her own from some remembered sermon or book ; "yes, always the same—a poor dying creature ; yet not always the same : day by day nearer death

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—nearer the great account, when the destroying angel will fly over, and look for the blood on the door-posts.”

“O,” said Pak in a tone of no longer disguised anger, “that’s too good by a long way for me ; besides, I’m not going to be tied all my life to the apron of a Methodist preacher.”

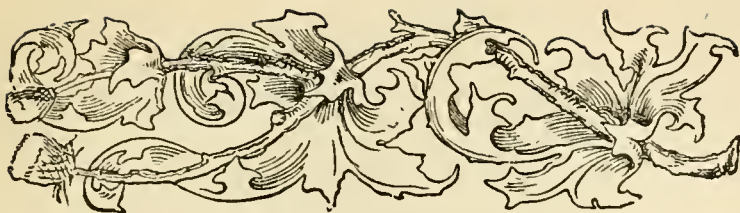
And here his natural impetuosity, his enemy within, had fairly gotten the mastery ; so with a fling round, he turned his back on Emmy, dashed wildly down the cliff-path which crossed their way, and was out of sight in an instant. Again and again he hated himself for what he was doing—again and again he was for turning back and clasping Emmy in his arms, and giving himself to her persuasion ; but the evil horse of his soul had the bit in his teeth, and his was the moving power, curb him who might.

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As for poor Emmy, she was at one of those strange confluences of strong streams of feeling, which issue in a great calm. She neither wept nor spoke, but moved slowly away in the landward direction, with her eyes fixed on the ground.


Shortly she became aware of something rustling in the dry grass beside the path ; and her first words were, "Come along, Bones ; I thought you had gone too."

And so he had ; scuttling away after his young master. But Bones was a dog of sober judgment, and good manners too, except where sport was in question ; and soon perceiving that anything but sport was "up," he just halted to see the last of Pak, and trotted back to take up his lot with Emmy.



## CHAPTER VII.

THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER.

“UNPOWDER treason” in Nether-  
erton school was a joyous  
reality. The Doctor, with  
his true Tory sympathies, would as soon  
have thought of abolishing its celebration  
as of abolishing Sunday.

In consequence, it was always a day  
much anticipated, and provided for by an  
ample supply of subscription fireworks.  
The very form and precedents of such pro-  
vision had been laid down by precedent.  
The captain of the school wrote up to  
Madame Hengler, the great purveyor for  
Vauxhall ; and considerable was his added  
importance when the box arrived, directed

to him, and, as school etiquette would have it, to be opened by none but his own hands.

All this had duly happened the day before, and the captain and committee were now, at 5 P.M. on the great day itself, in the large schoolroom completing their arrangements, when the following dialogue occurred :

“I say, Dawes, tip us a knife, there’s a good fellow.”

“Not till I know what it’s for.”

“Why, there’s a stick missing. Here are twelve sixpenny rockets, and only eleven sticks ; and I’m going to cut one in half, and put it to two, that’s all.”

“Perhaps they won’t go up,” said Dawes.

“Never *you* mind ; I’ll take chance of that.”

So the stick was bisected, and care-

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fully fitted to two rockets ; and much handier and better proportioned the two looked in the eyes of the boys than Madame Hengler's lanky-shafted ten.

The evening was clear, and without a moon ; but the wind had risen, and blew with raving gusts from the S.W., as if it meant mischief. However, for the present all was well ; the smaller pieces, wheels, &c. might be let off under the shelter of the schoolroom-wall, and the rockets, if they could not quite preserve their perpendicular course, would flare about grandly, and shake out their coloured lights among the stars. So everybody was in high spirits.

Supper was over, and the long-expected hour of eight had struck, when the overture to the evening's entertainment came off in the firing of three maroons, followed by a loud ringing cheer from

the boys. The firework committee, with the captain at their head, were duly posted to keep the ground, and to superintend the proceedings, the Doctor himself among them, to see all safe.

Under such superintendence, piece after piece achieved signal success; and it was obvious, from the wide echoing of the cheers, that they were taken up by a considerable body of townspeople without.

At a certain stage of the proceedings, the Doctor, with the captain and the leading sixth-form boys, were busily employed in fixing the principal piece of the evening—a Guy, well-stuffed with minor devilries in the shape of Jacks-in-the-box and crackers, with an inscription in fiery letters, *Sic pereant omnes*.

Gregson and Dawes had been left in charge of the rocket-frame, and were keeping the public in play meantime. In



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due order, and, of course, without any misgiving on the part of Gregson, the first of the short-legged rockets was paid in to Dawes, who was fixing them on the frame.

“Now then, old fellow, see whether this won’t top ’em all,” said the confident inventor.

“Sorry to be bound for it,” was Dawes’s answer.

“Here goes a beagle !” he exclaimed, as he lit the fuse.

A shout of laughter and loud clapping of hands followed ; for the beagle seemed to think, contrary to the practice of that species, that “doubling” was his especial vocation ; and after ascending some fifty feet, deliberately curved over, and, after describing an imposing arc of fire, disappeared behind Messrs. Warham and Wix’s big factory.

“What’s that?” cried the Doctor, with a strange tone in his voice, the effect of a queer sort of pang which shot across his chest.

“Only a rocket with a short stick, sir,” answered Dawes, Gregson having disappeared in the crowd.

“Then don’t you send up such another.”

“Beg pardon, sir,” said the school-porter; “but I’m afraid we shall hear of that chap again.”

“Just run quietly round, Wilson, and see it safe.”

“That’s more than I dare promise, sir,” answered the porter, disappearing through the gate.

There is something very remarkable in the effect of an unacknowledged dread. It seemed as if half the school had instantly become paralysed. A splendid

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wheel had just begun to spin round, and was dispersing its sparks of different hues and patterns; but only the lower boys appeared to care about it. Some of the others formally joined in the applause; but almost every eye was really turned anxiously past the tall chimney where the mad comet had been lost to sight.

Two circumstances, however, served to divert the general attention from this source of fear. One was, that the fabric for the great *pièce de feu* at this moment, perhaps from having lost for the time the attention of its watchers, gave way before the wind, which had been steadily increasing; the other that, while all were crowded round the ruin, speculating whether the Guy could be rehabilitated, the porter returned, and announced to the anxious Doctor that he had been all round the factory, and “couldn’t find no trace o’ ’un.”

So the committee and the Doctor set themselves to repair the mischief, and meanwhile the show went on.

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Between the great factory and the river was a space of ground which in times past had been occupied by cottages, such as cottages were at Netherton in other years. Of these, such as stood in the way of the new building had been removed. The rest were left, and served as inferior out-houses, where empty casks and other articles of lumber were deposited. The river-front of these half-ruins was one of the very few picturesque objects in modern Netherton; and Mr. Gilp, who served as drawing-master to both the school and the college, might be sometimes seen sitting with his class among the coarse grass and the marsh-marigolds on the field opposite, treating the old

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cottages as a drawing-lesson. The few bits of mossy thatch, judiciously exaggerated; the quaint wooden gallery, with its hand-rail and carved balusters, projecting from the old window which nestled under a pent-house roof of dark lichened tiles,—all this, duly reflected in the still river, with a punt among reeds in the foreground, decorated Gilp's modest study in Evenborough, and hung, in various degrees of daub, in some of the school-studies also.

It wanted about ten minutes to nine, when Dr. Resp, driven by his groom, was passing, in the well-known medical phaeton, along the road which at one point gets a glimpse of the factory cottages across the field. The Doctor was half-dozing after a hard day's work, with his arms folded and his head on his chest, when the groom timidly touched him on the arm.

“Beg pardon, sir; but ain’t that something as shouldn’t be?”

The Doctor looked in the direction pointed at, and saw small scudding threads of smoke, driven by the wind, and lit up by an occasional flash of flame issuing from the thatch of the factory cottages.

“Hullo, Sam, that’s mischief; push along to the fire-office as hard as it’s safe.”

The Doctor’s mare, accustomed to Sam’s “double-quick” chirrup, put both her best legs foremost, and in less than two minutes they were at the fire-office in the High-street.

“Now you help look-up the firemen, Sam,” said the Doctor. “I’ll put up the mare; ’t isn’t the first time.”

So this part of the matter was taken care of.

Meantime the wind had increased to half a gale; and those who on the first

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cry of "Fire !" raised by Sam and the firemen, had run off to the spot, arrived in the field just in time to see the full blaze from the cottages playing on the window-frames of the factory, which had already caught, and were glittering with beads of fire.

In the school-yard, the Doctor and the committee were still busy setting up the damaged Guy in a place of better shelter under the school-wall, when there rose from the mob outside a shout of surprise and dismay—a cry which would make any man pause in his work, and eagerly seek for its reason.

"What's that ? what's that ?" cried the Doctor, after his manner, hurriedly.

"Look there, sir !" shouted a dozen voices at once. And the Doctor looked up, to see the sky lurid with the light from behind, and the first bright tongue of



flame shooting up from the factory-roof. To the credit of Dr. Digam's presence of mind, his first care was peremptorily to order the whole school within walls.

"Gentlemen," said he, "there is a deplorable fire, and I grievously fear we are not guiltless of it. But I'm responsible for your safety, and I mean to look to it. The monitors will see the whole school in ; and, Mr. Timins, I rely on you to keep all safe, and let none out. The front dormitory - windows will give you a full view of all that is to happen. My post is elsewhere.—Wilson, let me out, and see that the gates are kept strictly."

By this time the whole of the big roof was a furnace of roaring flames. In the gusts of wind, they swept along almost horizontally, thousands of sparks, like driving swarms of bees, flying far away into the night. In the intervals of

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comparative calm, the flames swirled about, wreathed with dark worms of smoke twined among them ; while the skeleton ribs of rafters were beaded with pearls of whiter fire, which seemed continually running up them and disappearing. At such times, the columns of smoke rose brown and lurid into the air, laced with vivid white at the edges. The sky and the stars looked an unearthly blue in the presence of the conflagration, and the street-lamps put on a dull green, and almost vanished.

As to the engines, with no more delay than was inevitable, they had been got out, and, at the usual tearing gallop, had dashed into the field behind, where was an inexhaustible supply of water from the river, especially at this time, when it was high spring-tide. But a hand-engine is but a poor thing at its best ; and there were no steam fire-engines at Netherton.

Besides, when they arrived, they might as well have tried to put out Vesuvius. The whole factory was one huge crater, roaring, crackling, raging in tempestuous fury. Here and there, where the jet happened to fall, there was heard a sharp sputter, and there rose a cloud of white steam, mingled with the hell of smoke and flame and sparks ; but that was all.

Suddenly there was a cry, "How about the houses in Factory-lane?" Ah, how about them indeed? Could they be reached with the hose? Alas! that picturesque punt which figured in Mr. Gilp's drawing-lesson existed on paper only; and even if a fireman were to swim over with the hose, which was immediately offered, the point of danger in Factory-lane was not, it was feared, near enough to the river to be reached from where the engines now were. And between that spot and

Factory-lane itself, a drive round for them of at least a mile and a half intervened. Besides, the horses had been sent away, and would have to be again fetched. And, to add to all, the uncomfortable thought flashed over people, that the whole of Factory-lane, and the street leading to it, were now "up" for the new drainage scheme, and the unhappy houses couldn't after all be approached.

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The appearance of the interior of No. 4 in that lane, on this evening, was that which it had worn on many evenings past. Mrs. Benson's weak health had been the plea for declining the kind offer of the Rector that Emmy might, with the rest of the school-children, witness the fireworks under his protection. Mrs. Benson's unwillingness to break in upon her habit of retiring very early to rest had

come in aid of her reluctance to intrust her darling even to such a guide in the midst of a nightly crowd.

The precaution for that particular evening turned out indeed to be fully justified. The good lady had been taken at tea-time with a worse than usual faintness, and, after in vain having recourse to the generally successful ether-drops, had needed all Emmy's help to get her up to bed.

The little girl had knelt by her mother's bedside, and had put up the nightly prayer for protection, with the change from her own prayers into the plural, now not unusual. But it was barely half-past seven, and she was not yet sleepy; so she sat, half reading, half in a waking dream, by the little round table with its solitary candle. As she sat on, she could hear the increasing sound of voices in the school-yard; and the bangs of the three maroons

and the accompanying cheer did not pass unnoticed by her. She did not go to the window, because the opposite houses, being very much higher than their own, shut out all view of the sky. Cheers on cheers followed ; but neither these, nor the interest of her book, could keep Emmy's eyes from closing. Before long the little head sank down, and after one start, occasioned by the falling of the book on the floor, and a look to see that it had not awoken her mother, remained resting on the table before her.

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Was it a dream? No, no; it was no dream. A tight grasp round the waist; a sudden snatching up; a roaring and scorching and dazzling; a suffocating hot smoke filling her eyes and throat.

“Jump! for the love of God, jump!” she heard strong voices cry.

A heavy shock, as of falling on something soft, a sharp crack of pain, which seemed to dart through her whole frame, and she found herself and another figure, by which and on which she was lying, the centre of an eager group of faces glaring in the lurid light of strong flame.

Those who stood by relate that she screamed, "Mother, mother!" and then lost sensation.

As she was being carried off to the hospital, "The boy, the boy! Look after the boy!" was the general cry. Poor fellow, he seemed past looking after. The mattress, which had been laid on the rough heaps of earth that filled the street, had indeed broken his fall; but he lay senseless in a heap, and to the various attempts to arouse him made no response.

At this moment there was a cry to make way, and Dr. Resp appeared, be-



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grimed with smirch, and bleeding from a wound in the forehead.

“Bless us, Doctor,” cried a woman’s voice; “are ye hurt?”

“Nothing, my good friend ; nothing but a broken head. But what’s this?”

“It’s the lad as saved her,” cried the same voice; “and they say he’s dead.”

There was an anxious silence while the Doctor stooped down and examined the lifeless mass. Before he gave any verdict he took a small bottle from his pocket, and forcing the mouth open, poured something in.

“He’s not dead, my friends ; only stunned. But we can’t tell yet what harm is done. Watch him, some of you. I must go on farther. I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

These last words of Dr. Resp’s implied that this was not the only feature

in the distressing scene. The whole of the houses on the factory side of the lane were by this time in a blaze, and whatever could be saved out of them had been saved ere this. It seemed as if the salvage had been complete as far as human life was concerned, as few would be, like the Bensons, shut up for the night; indeed half the population had been out seeing the fireworks. The crowd in the lane was fast thinning, being driven away by the intolerable heat. There was only one anxious group in sight, and they soon came up, bearing on their entwined arms a man who had been severely hurt by some falling timbers; the Doctor leading the way, and guiding them over the heaps of earth and bricks.

“There,” he said, “you can go on to the hospital without me. Now then, any sign of life?”

“Not a bit, Doctor.”

“Here; let me see. All right; he’s coming round.”

The Doctor once more had recourse to the bottle. The eyes began slowly to open, and a long loud sigh was heard.

“Well, my boy?”

“Emmy, Emmy! Where’s Emmy?” was the only answer.

“Emmy’s safe, my fine lad.”

“Is she hurt? O, you’re the Doctor, and you’re sure to know.”

“Everybody’s hurt to-night, my boy, more or less.”

The lad tried to sit up, but fell back again.

“That poor Mrs. Benson!” he cried.

“What of her?” asked half a dozen voices.

“Shall I tell? No, I can’t tell. Yes, I will,” said in one breath the bewildered boy.

"Tell on," said the Doctor; then aside to the bystanders added: "Perhaps it will relieve him; and then we'll take him to the hospital."

"O," said the half-hysterical voice, now interrupted by sobs, "I went to her first, when I broke in and saw Emmy asleep. I called her, I shook her, but—but—" and the poor lad broke out into a hysterical fit of sobbing, in the midst of which he uttered some words.

"What does he say?" asked the bystanders.

"He says she was dead."

"Yes, dead," repeated Pak; "and then the flames burst in, and — what are you doing with me?"

"We're carrying you where you will be taken care of, and where Emmy is," replied the kind Doctor.

It was as Pak, amidst his sobs, had

stated. Mrs. Benson's spirit had fled before her little girl had dropped asleep; and the fire had been but her funeral pile.





## CHAPTER VIII.

### IN THE HOSPITAL.

**W**HAT a strange process is the gradual return to consciousness! Where does the spirit wander during that period of apparent death in life?

Emmy opened her eyes at last on a scene so new to her that she was fain to turn on her pillow, and try to rid herself of this too vivid dream, as she deemed it. But a sharp twinge of pain in making the attempt still further aroused her, and lifting her heavy eyelids, she gazed into the face of a kind, motherly-looking woman,

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who was sitting by the side of her bed, and was holding some cordial in her hand, to be given to the patient as soon as her senses returned. The nurse, who was by no means one of Pharaoh's lean kine, put her stalwart arm under the clustering auburn curls, and raised the little head sufficiently to enable the sufferer to take her draught. Presently she went off to other bedsides, and Emmy was left to arrange her ideas as best she might. How was it that any hand but her mother's tended her? That was too great a puzzle for the poor brain just now, so she left it alone, and tried to make out her whereabouts. He eyes wandered up and down a long lofty room, with whitewashed walls and sanded floor; rows of little beds, like her own, ranging on either side the whole length of the room; a large window at each end, and a fire-



place opposite the door in the middle of one side, making a break in the monotonous line of beds. All this Emmy mechanically took in, and also read the illuminated texts which hung here and there on the walls, without getting much idea out of it all; so that she was almost forced to the conclusion, poor child, of the old woman in the nursery-rhyme, that she was not herself at all, so unaccountable was everything around.

While she was worrying her mind about it, Dr. Resp came up, with his pleasant look and cheery voice, and asked his patient how she did.

“Are you in much pain, little one?”

“When I move, sir, a good deal. But, please, sir,” she added, gaining confidence from the kind face and from the grasp of the warm hand laid gently on her wrist, “the worst is, I can’t tell where I

am, or how I came here." And the lustrous tears welled up in her touching brown eyes.

"Well, my little maid," answered the Doctor, feeling rather choky himself, "I'll try and make it all clear to you. This, you know, is the hospital. You've plenty of companions, you see. And we brought you here because you had a fall last night and hurt yourself."

A painful expression of returning memory crossed the little face now. The Doctor went on unheeding, as it must be told first or last.

"There was a great fire last night—the 5th of November, you remember?—and a rocket set fire to some thatch behind the factory, which was burnt down, and some cottages, and yours amongst the number. But no one was killed, and only two hurt besides you—a tramp, and

the brave boy who saved you by jumping with you out of the window."

"Did he?" said Emmy, a bright light in her eye and a flush on her cheek. "And is he hurt really? O, I hope not!"

The good Doctor smiled to himself at this instant identification of the actual person who had done it. "The ruling passion strong in—weakness," thought he, and answered, "No, he's getting well fast; and you must be a good girl, and do the same."

He was moving away, but Emmy called him back.

"Please, sir, do you know why my mother is not here to nurse me? She was poorly last night, I remember; but I suppose she is well now."

"Yes, my child," said the Doctor in a solemn tone, "she is quite well now, never to be ill again."

The large wistful eyes were raised to his. Emmy could not mistake his meaning; and yet she could not believe what he implied. She could not speak to ask an explanation, but looked so pleadingly at him that the poor man had to turn away before he could continue his tale.

“Your mother died last night, lying quietly in her bed, with you sitting by her. You would not surely wish to bring her back to pain and sickness after she has passed so peacefully away to where the weary are at rest? Think of it, little one. You wouldn’t be so selfish, I know.”

The Doctor had roused her at last.

“O, was I selfish and cruel to my mother?” she cried, the tears overflowing now. “Indeed, indeed, I tried not to be; but—” and a shiver ran through her frame—“I am sure she was only asleep.

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It must have been that dreadful fire that killed her; and I left her there to die all alone! O, how I wish I had died instead! I remember it now: she had gone to bed early, and I sat by the little round table reading *Sergeant Dale*, and I looked over and saw her sweetly asleep; and after that it was all a dream—first a happy one, and then a crash and confusion. It makes my head ache to think of it. But, sir, she really wasn't dead!"

The poor child had worked herself up into such a state of excitement that the Doctor began to fear for the consequences. His assurances could not calm her. The idea of her poor mother left to a dreadful death was quite too much for her. A bright idea occurred at length to Dr. Resp. He went and told his difficulty to Pak, who was long ere this fully sensible and quiet.

“Mayn’t I go to her, sir? She will believe me.”

“No, my boy; you couldn’t walk if you tried to-day; you are too stiff. But give me a message to her.”

“Then tell her,” said he, “from me, ‘Pak says you know him too well to believe he would have left your mother to die and saved himself alive; that he knew for certain Mrs. Benson was dead before he took you away. She died while you were asleep.’ And please tell her, sir, to remember her talk on the cliff, and not to grieve too much.”

This message, delivered to Emmy word for word, had a wonderful effect. She was calm directly, and merely saying in a gentle voice, “I’m wrong and he’s right; please tell him so, sir, with Emmy’s love; and thank you, sir, for all your kindness,”

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she buried her head in her pillow, to think it all out.

Emmy had, during this season of trial, a hard lesson to learn, and a difficult test to stand.

As she lay confined by the nature of her hurt to one position, thoroughly rebellious feelings swelled up in her heart. Had anyone ever had such troubles before? Mother, home and all, gone! and she, perhaps, a cripple all the rest of her life, and a burden upon others! Pak was left, and his kind words were as a gleam in the darkness; but perhaps they were merely the first outburst of his kind heart, and even he would come to despise her now. She felt herself miserably untrue to her own principles, and the pain of her limb night and day made her so irritable that she quite despised herself, and thought she should like to hide away from Pak,



and from the rest of the world. She sometimes, for a moment, tried to think she should like to die ; but this was never serious, for she felt far too wicked, poor child. But this sad state did not last long.

There was a certain Lady Cooper, who was visiting in the neighbourhood, and often came into the hospital. She had gone through trouble herself, and had that gentle chastened look and voice which so quickly find their way to the hearts of fellow-sufferers. She took a great fancy to Emmy, and would often speak to her words of comfort, and read to her from the Bible, or from other books. At first she said little in return : but at last her shyness gave way, and she confided her griefs to her kind friend, who in turn told her some of her own story : how trouble had taught her to know herself, and how much real happiness she had gathered from its

lessons. She set her at rest as to Pak's despising her, by bringing him to see her one day, rather contrary to rule ; and after the happy five minutes together, Emmy had no more fears on that head. She was four months in the hospital ; but towards the latter part of the time she was becoming convalescent, and had quite regained her cheerfulness. Her good friend Lady Cooper had gone from the neighbourhood, but she had left behind her peace in Emmy's breast. She could think of her mother now with thankfulness, and could trust her own future with Him who alone could order it. Pak had left long ago ; but he often brought her little presents, and had a few minutes' chat with her.

One afternoon, when Emmy came in from a stroll in the hospital-garden, which she could now accomplish without crutches,

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she was going to her bedside to put some snowdrops in water, when she was told to go into the committee-room, as a lady wished to speak to her. This was rather an alarming summons for a shy girl of thirteen; and the lady whom she saw on entering the room was hardly a person to reassure her. Facing her, with the breadth of the board-room table between, stood a tall, erect, and rather thin woman, of perhaps about forty, though the scanty curls showing in front of her bonnet, with their streaks of iron-gray, would have made you guess her to be older. But her piercing eyes had lost none of their brightness. Bloom she had never had to lose, but with her regular features and dignified bearing, she was still considered rather a handsome woman. Emily dropped a courtesy, immediately recognising Mrs. Bythsea, the Rector's wife.

“So you are Emily Benson, who was so much injured by that unjustifiable fire in the autumn?”

“Yes, ma’am, I am.”

“So I believe; and your mother is dead, and you are invalided, perhaps, for life?” interrogated the matter-of-fact lady.

The tears welled up into poor Emmy’s eyes. A feeling of pride kept them back, but she could not speak.

The Rector’s lady—who was, perhaps, as devoid of tact as any woman could be, though kind at heart—always made a point of investigating a case thoroughly before acting; so she went on:

“Ah, well, Dr. Resp assures me that, with proper care, rest, and nourishing diet, there is no danger of a relapse; so, as they can keep you here no longer, and there is nowhere else where you can go, the

Rector has advised me to offer you the shelter of our roof."

Emmy, choking down her emotion, managed to say,

"My duty and thanks to the Rector, ma'am, but I had rather go somewhere else, and earn my living."

"A very proper feeling on your part," answered the lady, never suspecting that she was herself the object that Emmy wished to avoid; "but, you see, it is an impossibility for you to earn your bread just now; and I may say, it would be like committing suicide, were you to refuse the rest and good living you would get at our house, and resolve on killing yourself with work elsewhere."

This was a strong way of putting it, and Mrs. B. felt proud of her oratorical powers; but happening to glance at the sensitive face, quivering with emotion, and

the rebellious tears now fairly in full course down the cheeks, her heart was touched for the orphan girl, and coming up to her, she said, as gently as she ever said anything,

“I’m afraid I’ve been talking too long and too loud for my little patient that is to be ; but I’ll leave you to think over it now. Remember” (she had never told her this before), “you are to be like a daughter to us, not to belong to the servants at all ; but, as the Rector bid me tell you, to be our own little one.”

She stooped her erect form, and kissed the hot, wet cheek. Perhaps Mrs. B. had never, since the birth of her only son, felt such an unusual thrill of tenderness. As for Emmy, she was quite conquered.

“O, thank you, ma’am, and thank the kind Rector a thousand times! I am sorry I was so cross before.”

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Mrs. B. merely said, "I didn't observe that you were cross, my child; but pain makes people feel so, I know. Now, good-bye; I shall bring my carriage round for you on Saturday next, if all's well."

So Emmy had to make the most of her few days, in taking leave of her friends in the hospital, and in trying to comfort her especial pet, little Johnny Jay, a rosy-cheeked, blue-eyed boy of six, who had lost an arm, and who loved her, poor little lad, with all his heart.

Mrs. Bythesea drove home very well pleased with herself, and, which was more to the point, with Emmy also. But there was one misgiving which would not let her rest: so as soon as the cloth was removed from the dinner-table, and the Rector and herself were left over the dessert, she begun to ease her mind.



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“My dear Philip, if you will let that *Times* wait a bit, and listen to me, I have something particular to consult you about.”

“At your pleasure, madam,” said the courtly old Rector, bending his head, and patiently laying aside the newspaper, which, arriving generally about with the cheese, was his daily after-dinner treat.

“I wouldn’t broach the subject,” continued Mrs. B., “during the servant’s presence; but I am in great perplexity about your notion of adopting Emily Benson. She is all one can wish in herself; but remember, my dear Philip, there’s our Gerald, he will be home for his vacation in June; and it’s quite against my principles to throw two young people together in the way they would be, were she living in the house during his stay at home.”

The good man, instead of sympathising with her in this serious difficulty, threw

himself back in his chair, and burst into a loud fit of laughter ; rather an unusual thing with the humorous but most decorous parson. Mrs. B., naturally insulted by his levity, drew herself up into a more erect posture than usual, and with a burning face and flashing eye, said somewhat severely,

“Very well, Rector” (she always called him “Rector” when taking him to task), “we’ll drop the subject. I see I was mistaken in supposing my husband able to help me out of my dilemma.”

So saying she swept out of the room, he not rising as usual to open the door for her, but taking up instead his postponed newspaper, and apparently absorbing himself in its contents.

“Poor dear Kate !” he said to himself ; “I was very rude to laugh out ; but it tickled me so, the idea of that pretty

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little baby-girl turning suddenly into a designing young woman, bent on the conquest of that great fellow Gerald, who thinks himself a man, at any rate. Well, I suppose I must give up this pet scheme of mine. I had taken a great fancy to adopting our little Sunday-scholar, and thought her companionship might have a soothing effect upon poor Kate's nerves. I'm sure these tantrums must try her."

This, and a good deal more, passed through the husband's mind, mixed with leading-articles and the state of the money-market, until the tea-bell rang, when, on entering the drawing-room, he at once broached the subject.

"Kate, my dear, I've been thinking over what you said; and as you have such fears, perhaps we had better give up Emily Benson as a daughter, and try to keep her out of want by other means."

“Give her up! O no, I couldn’t give her up; she won my heart this very day. I must have her.”

“Well, then, my dear, we are still in the same serious peril we were in before. How are we to prevent this designing young person from beguiling our only son into marrying her, murdering me for the sake of the money, stowing you away in an almshouse or an asylum, and then quietly putting her husband out of the way to bestow her rich hand upon some former plebeian suitor? It’s an awful prospect; and though you call it wrong to read sensation novels, here’s one cut-and-dried in your own imagination.”

Poor Mrs. Bythesea! her husband had the best of it; and she could not keep her rigid features from relaxing into a smile at his imaginary realisation of her fears.

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“What nonsense you talk, Phil ! can’t you propose some way out of the difficulty, instead of bantering me like that ? At all events, your chaff has put one into my head. Suppose we ask your brother the Colonel to let her spend her holidays with them ? She would be a charming companion for Lucy, wild headstrong girl as she is. I’ll write to-night, and arrange it all.”

And so, as was usually the case, Mrs. Rector gave herself the credit of first having named the danger, and at last having provided against it ; whereas the quieter and deeper Rector had seen it long ago, and the way to obviate it also ; but knew his mind’s peace better than to be first to propound either.

Anyhow, so it was settled ; and on the following Saturday the Rectory car-

riage fetched Emmy away from her hospital friends, and set her down at the Rectory garden-gate.





## CHAPTER IX.

### THE DAY AFTER THE FIRE.



N the morning of the 6th of November, the Mayor, like other people, had not got to bed till the small hours were beginning to grow large. Breakfast-tables in Netherton were laid late, and filled later, that day.

Just as his worship was sitting down, a note was brought in, directed in a well-known hand ; but the contents were as unexpected as the handwriting was familiar.

“What do you think of this, my dear ?”  
said the Mayor.



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“DEAR MR. MAYOR,—I was surprised, while in my dressing-room this morning, by a knock at the door. It proved to be my head-boy, with a packet in his hand; and his message was this: ‘The scholars fear, sir, that they were the cause of the terrible fire last night. What they can do of course is as nothing in comparison of what has happened; but here’s all the money in the school towards the relief of the sufferers, and we are sure our parents will do more.’ I have added a trifle of my own; and am, dear Mr. Mayor,

“Yours very faithfully,

“DANIEL DIGAM.”

“Fine fellows!” exclaimed Mrs. Mayor.

“But let us see what it is,” said he; and so saying, unfolded a cheque for 227*l.* 9*s.* 6*d.* “Ah, it’s pretty clear how that got

put together. Poor dear Doctor ! every shilling of the 200*l.* was got by good honest brain-work. It's a fair tithe of all he has laid by in these ten years, I've reason to know."

Nor was the astonishment of the worthy pair diminished when, before the meal was over, the mid-day mail brought a registered letter with the Exeter post-mark, and a 100*l.* note enclosed, "For the burnt out;" the only indication of its donor being the single word "*Apodemos*" ("One from home") on the flap of the envelope.

"Well, my dear, this is a day of wonders. However, we have a capital nest-egg; and now I'll send for the crier, and call a meeting at three in the Town-hall."

The meeting was duly crowded, and received with loud cheers the Mayor's announcements, which, being made in his

opening speech, at once disarmed all wrath against the Doctor and the "scholars." And there was another hearty cheer when the senior partner in Messrs. Warham and Wix's business announced, on behalf of his firm, another donation of 200*l.*, stating that their losses were amply covered by insurance.

The Mayor then rose to make another statement. He was happy to inform them that no life had been lost in the fire. He held in his hand two depositions, taken by himself that morning, which satisfactorily, though sadly, accounted for the death of poor Mrs. Benson. They were made by the girl her daughter, and the brave lad who had saved the girl's life—both lying hurt, and the girl, he feared, seriously, in the hospital. She had deposed that her mother had had a worse fainting-fit than usual at tea; that she, the girl,

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had fallen asleep while reading in her mother's bedroom, and was woke by the dropping of her book, but observed it did not wake her mother, who was a very light sleeper : thought nothing of this at the time, but cannot help connecting it with what she has heard since. The substance of the lad's deposition has been already told ; and both were confirmed by the opinion of Dr. Resp, that the fainting-fits to which Mrs. Benson was liable were likely at some time to terminate her life suddenly. The only casualties, the Mayor continued, were the two already mentioned, and a poor tramp, whose shoulder-blade had been broken by a falling timber.

“ We may congratulate our friend here, and ourselves, who could ill spare him, that a fourth has not been added,” he continued, pointing to Dr. Resp, who ap-

peared with a huge "bar sinister" of black plaster across his forehead.

A worthy citizen here expressed his hope that the orphan girl and her rescuer would be first taken care of out of the fund.

On this the Rector rose, and said he believed he might state that neither of them would need the kindness which the public, he doubted not, would freely offer. He had that morning seen Dr. Digam, whom delicacy of feeling prevented from being present. He was not now at liberty to say what passed respecting the lad; he would only add that the girl had long been a favourite scholar of Mrs. Bythessea's schoolmistress; and should they recover, of which he was glad to say there was every prospect, there was no doubt that both would be seen to.

On this, another hearty cheer. In

fact, the heart of Netherton seemed on this day to be in its mouth; the noble conduct of the Doctor and his scholars had rolled off the cloud, and everyone was pleased with everyone else.

At the close, the Mayor announced that the subscription-list mounted up to over 800*l*.

But that mysterious bank-note from Exeter? Often was the envelope examined, and heads were laid together; but no solution appeared.

The meeting had broken up, and only a few of the "dons" were standing together in knots, when there burst into the room Amy Podger, all of a heat and out of breath.

"Pleaze, sir,—gen'l'men, I me-an,—I be come to know where the crowner's quest be to sit on my mother's poor gen'l'-man?"

“Crowner’s quest, my girl!” said the astonished Mayor; “why, he’s not dead, that we know of.”

“Ay, but a be, though. Hur split off to the vier ’bout nine o’clock, and uz never been zeed zunce.”

“Not quite that, Amy,” answered Dr. Resp; “I saw him myself at the hospital, where he stayed several hours, and didn’t leave till past one.”

“Then I’ll go there and zee vor’n; vor mother’s teaking on turble ’bout’n. He war nashun good to we, that a war, whatever’s gone wi’ un.”

And Amy swung out, one great red arm wiping the face with the apron, the other working beside her like a pump-handle.

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“I think I’ve got it, Mr. Mayor,” said Mr. Warham; “don’t you?”



“Shouldn’t wonder if I had,” answered the Mayor.

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A meeting of the masters at the school had been appointed for the 6th of November, at which the decision of the mathematical master respecting the annual prize essay was to be given. The time fixed for the meeting was one o’clock, when the three masters nearly at the same time appeared in Dr. Digam’s study.

On the present occasion, Mr. Heckswy arrived a few minutes after his two colleagues, and at once greeted the Doctor. “Well, sir, this will have been an eventful day in more senses than one.”

“How so, Mr. Heckswy?”

“Why, sir, I have to produce before you a most extraordinary result of the contest for the astronomy prize essay. Here is one, I may venture to say, of

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surpassing merit, and worthy even of publication as a separate treatise on the popular history of the science. I had no idea we had such material among the scholars. Of course I have not opened the sealed paper; but here is the envelope, bearing the same motto as the essay, an odd one enough,—*Pax vobiscum.*”

“From what I gather, then,” said the Doctor, “you have no doubt about your decision?”

“None whatever, Doctor; not one of the other essays comes anywhere near this, in any point. Even were the *matter* of less note, the diagrams and illustrations are so beautiful, that it would merit special notice.”

“I think, Mr. Timins,” said the Doctor, “that after so decided an opinion, we may venture to open the envelope. Will you, if you see no objection, kindly perform that office for us?”

And the great white hand was reached out, and after a moment's curious inspection of the delicately-written superscription outside, the envelope was torn open. To the surprise of his two colleagues, Mr. Timins burst into a loud fit of laughter, handing at the same time the open paper to the Doctor, who, leaning towards Mr. Heckswy, shared the inspection with him. The merriment was general. No name appeared; but instead of one, a cleverly-etched figure of a boy in rags looking through a telescope.

“Well,” said the Doctor, “there can be little doubt who this is : no other than our ragged friend Pak, the hero of No-man's Land, and of the pier-head.”

On this Mr. Heckswy rubbed his hands with delight, and exclaimed, “I've said a hundred times that that scarecrow had genius in him.”

“But I forgot,” said the Doctor gravely ; “perhaps you don’t know that he was terribly injured last night in the fire, and is now lying in the hospital.”

“To tell you the truth, sir,” answered Mr. Timins, “the matter before us was so new and strange, that I believe we both had forgotten the circumstance. But the scholars sent, sir, the first thing this morning to inquire at the hospital, and the answer was, that he was more stunned than hurt, and that the Mayor was there taking his deposition about poor Mrs. Benson’s death. The girl, they said, was a worse case, as her thigh was broken ; but she too was not doing otherwise than well, and the Mayor had been with her likewise.”

“Thank you, Mr. Timins,” said the Doctor ; “your intelligence is a relief to me ; for, you see, we are in two difficulties. Supposing this essay to be osten-

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sibly his, first we have to ascertain whether he is within the number of those admissible to compete; and, secondly, we must make sure that the work is really his own. You are aware that the strange old gentleman with whom he lives is a devotee to science; and we ought to be sure whether or not he has had a hand in this essay. Now this can only be ascertained by examining the lad himself; and therefore I am glad to hear that he *can* be examined. The former point can be cleared up here on the spot.—Mr. Heckswy, will you be good enough to read us the notice concerning the prize, which has been up in the school for the last six months?”

The nimble person addressed disappeared in quest of the notice. An eager group was standing near the school-door. As Mr. Heckswy snatched at the notice-board, he cried out to them, “Close as

wax, my lads, close as wax ; but I shouldn't wonder if you're all sold !”

One boy alone left the group, and made rather eagerly for the door at the farther end of the school, leading into the street. The rest looked one on another in hopeless bewilderment, as Mr. H. again disappeared into the study, with the notice-board under his arm.

“ A prize of three guineas, or its worth in scientific books, is hereby offered by the three masters to any boy who shall produce the best essay on the history and present state of the science of astronomy. The essay—”

“ That'll do, Mr. Heckswy. Then the competition was clearly open to all the world ; it does not say any scholar or any boy in the Netherton Grammar - school ; but it's as wide as young Adam.”

“ Hear, hear,” from Mr. Heckswy.

“Very good of you, sir,” said Mr. Timins, “to construe it so; but might we not take the view, that on a notice exposed in a school, ‘any boy’ means ‘any boy in that school’?”

“Perhaps we might, if we were so disposed; and we *may* have to fall back on your interpretation as the more delicate mode of repelling the essay, if it turn out that the crazy philosopher, as people call him, had much hand in it. But I must say I hope not; for I have long had my eye on this queer lad, and I really believe him to be a boy of great ability; and what is more curious, not only to be worthy of culture, but somehow or other to have acquired it.”

“I believe, sir,” said Mr. Heckswy, “I can almost relieve you *à priori* from any suspicion about the authorship. The whole essay, though excellent, is juvenile—the



work of a boy full of vigour and genius, but, at the same time, written in a somewhat crude and inexperienced style ; and the drawings show all the firmness and dash of a young and vigorous hand. Look here, sir," he said, as he opened on a spirited etching of Galileo writing "*Eppur si muove*" on the walls of his prison.

"Well, I hope and believe it; but I should like, if they'll let me, to see the boy, and hear for myself."

On this the meeting broke up, and the Doctor set off for the hospital.

Pak, after due examination, had at once been placed in the convalescent ward. He was shaken and bruised, and for the present had, by Dr. Resp's orders, to lie in bed ; but there was nothing really the matter. He had sufficiently got over the excitement of the night to have had some refreshing sleep, having been reassured by

hearing that Emmy, though with a fractured limb, was going on well, and that he should be taken to see her as soon as he could get up.

Almost as soon as he had arrived, the strange gentleman had been inquiring for him, and by Dr. Resp's orders was admitted. Whatever passed between them was in a whisper. The gentleman had also been to see Emmy, and on his way back to report her condition, had made kind inquiries at the bedside of the tramp, whose shoulder had been broken. The two faces met, and there was a start — as far as one so closely splintered up can be said to start. The sufferer said softly, but in a quick and agitated tone, "Who'd have thought to see you here, my l—?"

By this time Tiffy was at the bed's head, and gently but firmly laid his hand on the man's mouth. Whether the nurse

in attendance had heard, he was not sure; but after saying some words, low and in a kind tone, to the man, and slipping something under the bedclothes for him, he shook hands with the astonished nurse, leaving a substantial memorial of the greeting, and saying, "If you heard what that man said, it will be worth your while to be silent:—and take care of the boy." So saying, he went to Pak's bed, and some more words passed, after which he departed.

This visit seemed to soothe the lad wonderfully. He was not in the least agitated on the Mayor coming to make his inquiry, and had answered the questions without deviating from his former account. He was now lying quietly, pondering over the strange events which had brought about this new situation.

But this day was destined to be one

of stirring events, and Pak was not exempted from the common lot of Nether-tonians. The house-surgeon had just left the ward, and returned leading in a boy.

“Here he is,” said he. “Now you may just go and speak to him; but you mustn’t stay more than two minutes.”

“I say, Pak, we heard you were killed; but never mind that. I think it’s all right about the prize.”

“You don’t say that, Brayley?”

“Well, I only know this, that Heckswy came and took the notice-board in to the Doctor, and wouldn’t peach, but said, ‘Shouldn’t wonder if you’re all sold after all.’ Now what can that mean but that you’ve got it?”

“O no,” said Pak, “it means nothing of the kind. It means that they don’t wish to adjudge any prize because none

are good enough; and they wanted the notice-board to see whether they were obliged to give one."

"Well, all I can say is, the fellows didn't seem to think so. As I went out I heard your name five or six times. — Hallo, here comes the Doctor, as true as I'm alive!" And so it was, sure enough.

Pak had had many a look from the head-master, but never a word before. However, there was both real and studied kindness in the look and manner, and he was soon put at his ease.

"My good boy," said the Doctor, "first of all, you're a noble fellow. Let me begin by saying that."

"Thank you kindly, sir," said the lad, with an honest glow on his face. No one had praised him before.

"Then, next, did you write that essay all yourself?"

“Every word of it, sir.”

“And Mr. Tiffin did not help you?”

“O, sir, he has helped me in everything, and I owe all I ever knew to him; but he didn’t do a word of that. This boy Brayley told me one day in No-man’s Land that the prize was offered, and I told my — that is, I told Mr. Tiffin, and he showed me what to read; and I wrote it all. Please, sir, he’s never seen it.”

“That’ll do, my lad; then I have to tell you that the prize is yours.”

Pak’s eyes swam, and his heart thumped in his throat.

“Would you like to come among us at the school, my boy?”

“O yes, sir, of all things.”

“Then as soon as you are out from here you shall come. I’ll make it all smooth. I owe you something in re-

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turn for your fall, which we occasioned, and in return for your noble self-sacrifice."

"Please, sir, I can only thank you now."







## CHAPTER X.

### THE TALK ON THE BEACH.

**T**HE rectory was close to the church, and like it rather massive and mediæval. There were peaked gables, and mullioned windows not admitting too much light, and a pretty old-fashioned porch, with an illuminated scroll in stone, *Deo et amicis*. The house was nearly covered with creepers of various kinds; a cloth-of-gold rose perfumed in summer the garden side of it; clematis, yellow jasmine, ivy, and Virginian creeper, each asserted its claim to a portion of the walls and porch. Immediately opposite the front door, across

the gravel road, was the little gate into the churchyard ; to the left a short drive led to the street entrance. Over this drive, and the shrubs, was seen the church ; and to the right, stretching far back from the churchyard, lay the pretty garden, with its gay parterres, and its smooth croquet-lawn : in summer as bright a bit of ground as Netherton, or even Overton, boasted.

Emmy's window looked out on this same garden ; and very refreshing it was to her to gaze on the soft green grass and spring flowers, after her four months of whitewashed walls. Her room was neatly furnished, though without much taste. An ugly yellow paper hung on the walls ; a chest of drawers, washing-stand, and table, painted green, and a blue iron bedstead, were the prominent objects ; and, a redeeming point which should not be forgotten, a pretty new bookcase, the

Rector's gift. The shelves were nearly empty as yet, their only tenants being three books which Mrs. Bythesea had placed there as useful reading for her little *protégée*, to wit, *Locke on the Human Understanding*, Paley's *Evidences*, and Baxter's *Saints' Rest*. Of these Emmy took to the last-named very well, but the two former made her head ache, which Mrs. B. excused at present on the plea of weak health.

At first the little girl was very grateful and happy. The repose, and good food, and daily drives with her patroness soon brought back the roses to her cheeks ; but with returning health and spirits returned also a longing for her old friends and freedom. She pined for Pak, and Bones, and her old rambles. But it was not to be. Mrs. Bythesea had strict notions as to the bringing up of young ladies—for such she

intended Emmy to be—and was shocked at the idea of their ever going out alone. The good Rector, with all his clerical dignity, was much less particular, and often felt for the child; but years' experience had taught him in this, as in other things, not to interfere with his wife's management. She had taken wonderfully to the girl, so he thought it best to let her alone, and quietly to pursue his usual policy, silyly to hint improvements, or even to disparage and discourage them in hypothesis, till his wife fancied them her own suggestion, and him their opponent.

Poor little Emmy! this new-found “aunt” (it was happy this name was thought of, for “mother” she could never call her) was the dead fly in her cup of comfort. She grated on her daily. One morning, during a round of visits to poor cottagers, an incident occurred which

aroused Emmy's wrath, and caused her to speak unadvisedly with her lips, for which she was deeply penitent the minute after. Mrs. Bythesea, seeing her looking miserable, resolved to reward her for confessing her error by allowing her for once to go out alone, she herself being too tired to accompany her. Off sprang Emmy at the first word—had on her hat and jacket in a minute, and was on her way before there was time to retract the permission.

With more life in her than she had felt for many a day, she sped along the streets to "No-man's Land," thinking that a likely place to find Pak among the Grammar-school boys. She went like one who didn't care to be recognised, and fortunately met no one whom she knew. But when she reached the spot, no one was there except a few of Pak's former ragged playmates, from whom every feeling caused her to

shrink. Then first she remembered it was Saturday, and the bigger boys would be off to the cliffs and far away, beyond the reach of her weakened powers. So she turned her steps to the beach, and walked along rather dejectedly by the water's edge, with her dreamiest look in her eyes; when she was suddenly startled by a joyous shout, "Hallo! it's Emmy, by all that's charming!" and at the same time she became conscious of a vociferous barking close to her, and of some four-footed creature smothering her with caresses. The dreamy look was gone in a moment; and sparkling eyes and blushing cheeks metamorphosed the little maiden into a picture of health and happiness.

"O, this is jolly!" cried Pak: "how often have Bones and I kept watch on that piece of rock on half-holidays in vain!—But we're all right at last, old fellow;" patting

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the dog's head ; “ and you were the first to cry ‘ found,’ weren’t you, my boy ?—For we take it in turns, you know, Emmy. I’m getting up Italian out of school, so we watch half-an-hour at a time ; when Bones’s turn is on, I do Italian, and when my turn is on, Bones stretches his legs and scuds after the rabbits.”

Emmy laughed merrily at his description of their watch for her, with no small satisfaction that she had not been forgotten all this time. She thanked Bones profusely, patting and hugging him, and finally kissing the little white patch on his grisly forehead. Pak put in his claim, as captain of the watch, for a share of the payment ; perhaps he had his way, for it is certain that they were all very happy together. After the first excitement of the meeting was over, Pak proposed that they should walk a little farther on the



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beach, and then climb to a pretty little cave a short way up the face of the cliff, where Emmy would be sheltered from the cold east wind, and they could have a cosy talk over their experiences since last they met. Their meetings in the hospital had been so short and so public, that they had scarcely had a confidential chat since that memorable one on the cliff.

“ Well, little woman, and how do you like your quarters ? ”

“ O, everyone is very kind to me,” she answered, with rather a dreary sigh ; “ I have plenty to eat and drink ” ( “ Important item, eh, Bones ? ” put in Pak ) ; “ and I have a room to myself, looking out on a pretty garden, and a carriage to drive in ” ( “ Ah, that beats us, Bones,” said Pak, with an air of mock dejection ) ; “ and that’s about all, you silly goose ! ” ended Emmy, laughing in spite of herself at his bright hilarity.

“And shall I tell you what Bones and I twig out of all that, my poor Emmy?” said the lad in quite another tone. “We twig that the dejected little maiden we watched just now wandering solitarily along the sea-shore has but a dreary time of it, and would fain be back in the dear old cottage, rather than driving about in the rectory carriage.”

“O yes, I should think so, with my sweet mother again, and you! But I can’t wish her back; and it’s really very kind of the Rector and his wife to adopt me as they have done. Only sometimes I feel *so* dull! If I could only have Bones, I shouldn’t mind so much.”

“I’ll promise you him, anyhow,” said Pak, “but you must pave the way; you must tell them to-night about him. Be very eloquent, mind, for he really is quite a hero. Tell them what I am telling you

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for the first time,—how he followed me devotedly into your cottage that terrible night; how in trying to make his way out he got buried under some plastering that fell, and one heavier piece than the rest broke his leg; how he subsisted on what he could pick up in that neighbourhood for a few days, not being able to limp farther; how kind Dr. Resp found him, and bandaged his leg, and took care of him in his own house; and how the poor little beggar, as soon as he was master of his legs again, trotted off to Mrs. Podger's, looking for me, where he remained in a state of restless expectation for a day or two, and on my not appearing, started off on his travels again, and finally walked into our playground with dejected tail and melancholy mien; but on seeing me, got so boisterously happy, that the good Doctor, who witnessed this ebullition of

feeling, hadn't the heart to send him away. So with me he has remained on sufferance till now ; but I assure you he is too great a responsibility, for I know many of the chaps would torment him if I didn't watch him like a father. So I'm really glad to turn him over to you, Emmy. Amy Podger shall bring him to the rectory to-morrow with the story of his woes, you having descanted on them overnight."

Pak's plan was successfully carried out, the Rector taking to the poor doggie at once—his wife requiring a little talking over, and giving in at last, on seeing how much Emmy cared for it. So Bones followed Emmy's fortunes to the end of the chapter, to the mutual satisfaction of both parties.

But to return to the two in the cave. Pak told Emmy of his school-life ; of his growing friendship for Mr. Heckswy, and

of his own ardent ambitious longings to do something in the world.

“ You mustn’t be surprised, Emmy, if you hear of my disappearance some day. I can’t always stick down in a little hole like this Netherton. Life is short nowadays ; if I could reckon on the centuries of those patriarchs in your book, it would be another thing ; but as there’s no such time allowed for work now, I think I shall be up and doing as soon as I can. It’s hard lines a fellow wasn’t born in those Methuselah days ! ”

“ Why, Pak, you forget what you’ve got to start with. Their life wouldn’t have been half long enough for them to get up to where you are now. ”

“ Well, there’s some truth in that : ‘ I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time, ’ as our captain is always spouting. But for all that, I feel restless

and eager, as if I ought to do something, and must not loiter on the way. So I think I shall be off as soon as the Doctor has put into me all I can hold. Don't be afraid, little woman : there, now don't pull your hat-string all to pieces ; I shall always have you in my breast-pocket (and there sha'n't be a hole in it, either) ; and perhaps some day, if she isn't too grand a lady to look at me, I shall come home and fetch my little wife to share my work with me. So you must learn all you can, and keep bright and happy, for Pak's sake."

"Well, I'll engage to try ; but I must confess I don't care about my lessons now, so I'm afraid I shall never know half enough for you."

"You know more than half enough already, Emmy ; you have a very thoughtful forehead of your own, but Bones and I

suspect that madame down there turns all the lessons sour."

"Well," laughed Emmy, "you and Bones are very shrewd between you, especially Bones. Shall I tell you how I pass my days?"

"Yes, do; I want to know all about you."

"Well, then, I rise at half-past six; for Mrs. B. says young ladies should take an hour to dress, and spend half an hour at their devotions. I don't mind that, but I shock her sometimes by carrying my Bible into the garden, and joining my praises with those of the flowers and birds. That is my happiest time in all the day, so I asked her to let me get up earlier, so as to have time for both. Then after breakfast, Mrs. B. examines me in the Catechism, and makes me repeat remarks out of a book of moral precepts; but they seem cold after



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my bright little service with the birds and flowers. We study till twelve, dry things enough, mostly questions and answers in geography, history, and grammar ; then till one, I either walk in the garden, which I like, or go to see poor people with Mrs. B., which I don't like. In the afternoon, I sew for an hour every sort of work, because 'young ladies should be notable.' By and by, she says, I am to learn music and drawing, because 'young ladies should be accomplished,' and also languages, in case I should travel ; and the homely art of cookery, because 'young women should be handy.' And this sort of thing goes on until (it's wrong, I know) I get to hate myself and all I do. I never thought myself 'a young woman' before ; and all I did for mother, or for you, I did from love, and loved to do it. But now—ah, poor little me ! yet Mrs. Bythesea is very good

to me, and I'm an ungrateful creature, I fear."

"Did you ever read *Aurora Leigh*, my forlorn little maiden? Your account reminds me of the rigid aunt there, whose hard propriety made poor Aurora's spirit droop. By the bye, do you *ever* read poetry?"

"O dear no, Mrs. Bythesea says poetry enervates, and that I am too sentimental already, and want hardening."

"Well, that *is* rich! No wonder you looked such a dejected little object, wandering on that curve of sea-weed."

"O," said Emmy, with a bright loving glance, "that was only the fear of not seeing you, as we may not get another walk alone for many a long day."

No need to tell what happened on this very candid confession of Emmy's, but if Bones or the sea-birds understood English

they might have heard some such words as these—"You little darling! it's worth living for, after all, to make you so happy!"

"Well, then," Emmy laughed on, "you may have a little more of that same pleasure, for I want to tell you what happened this morning; telling my troubles to you makes it so much easier to bear them. I said I didn't like visiting the poor with Mrs. B., and I saw you look surprised. But, Pak, it's dreadful to me! She is for ever blaming them, and takes care to make out that however poor, or ill, or unhappy they are, it's all their own fault. I think she's talking at me all the time; for she always relieves them after she has abused them well. Well, this morning we went to Paradise-place: just the end of the parish, you know. Mrs. Podger she never blesses with her presence, having found her, I

fancy, on one occasion, as you say, 'too many' for her. But we went into the first and most ruinous of the cottages, and whom should I see, creeping along slowly in the cabbage-garden, but Johnny Jay, my little friend in the hospital, of whom I told you. I saw his cheeks were very flushed, and his little legs tottering, so I ran to him, and put my arm round him, to help him on; and he looked so delighted to see me. But he was nearly faint with the exertion; so his poor widowed mother ran towards us, and together we laid him on his pallet, and I smoothed his bright hair, and gave him some water to drink, stooping to kiss the little white forehead in doing so. I suppose my *outré* conduct, as she called it afterwards, made the Rectoress particularly bitter in her remarks; but I had to bite my lips to keep down my anger. In the coldest and harshest way,

she told poor Mrs. Jay that her conduct proved her void of all motherly affection. In the first place, she had selfishly had Johnny home from the hospital long before he should have been moved, meaning him to be a burden on the rectory charities ; and secondly, she took no care of him, but let him walk out when he ought not to leave his bed ; that doubtless he would have a relapse, and probably would die ; and she very likely would congratulate herself on having one mouth less to feed ! Fancy it—the mother's burning face, and proudly - suppressed tears, and look of anguish towards her pet boy ; and Johnny's weak efforts to plead his mother's cause ! I never felt so angry in my life ; I spoke out recklessly, my voice trembling with indignation. I told my benefactress that she was a hard, cruel woman, and that she didn't know what it was to be

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shut up in a sick-ward for months, or she would understand better the longing for home and a breath of sea-air; and a great deal more I said,—bitter, angry words, I know, though I can't remember what; but at last I broke down, and burst out crying; on which Mrs. B. swept out of the cottage, saying quietly, 'Emmy, we had better go home, I think.' I felt so angry and so penitent all in one, that I turned my back and left the poor people without speaking a word. I asked her forgiveness as soon as words would come, and it quite eased me to confess how passionate and ungrateful I had been. She was really very kind; and when I told her what friends Johnny and I had been in the hospital, she sent him up some nice dinner, and half-a-crown to get anything he fancied. But I want you, Pak, to go and see him for me some

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day, and give him my love, and tell him I'm sorry for my angry words ; and tell him, too, that though I turned away coldly, I didn't mean to forget him."

Pak promised to see to the youngster, and well he kept his promise.

The sun was westering now, and Emmy knew she must be going. Both had a presentiment that it would be long before they should have such another meeting. They descended from the cliff, and walked across the shining sands to the edge of the ebbing tide. There they stood for some minutes ; the one preparing to ask what the other was certain he should have to answer.

"Pak," said Emmy at last, "I wonder whether, after the fire and our wonderful escapes, and good fortune since, you now think there's a Providence that takes care of us ?"



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She looked at him pleadingly with those eyes, of which he knew the shining depths, and every gem that sparkled there: and he returned her gaze, not unmoved, but unflinching.

“Little woman, I can’t bear to grieve you; but I’m afraid I’m not much altered. There must be some Power that keeps all nature in harmony: but whether it is a Law, or a Person, passes me to comprehend. One thing I feel more than I did since I have mixed more with others, and read books; and that is, the immense difference between good people and bad. But we won’t discuss these matters now. You are my good little angel; and if you keep steady to me, I may get right in time.”

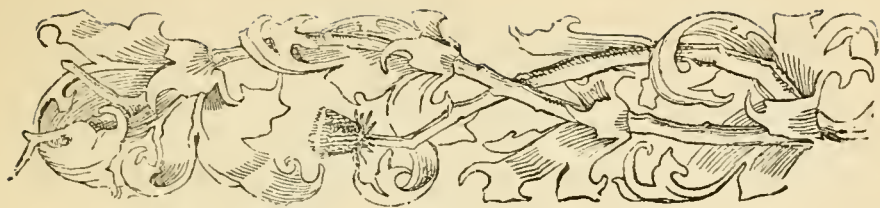
“Never fear my keeping steady,” said the earnest little maid; “you are mother and brother to me, and I owe you my

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life itself. And," she added, speaking low, —as women can, when they pour in their sweetest drops of comfort, and their very frame seems surrounded with light—"and I feel so certain that you will come right in the end, that I thank God for it every day I live."

And then the faces drew together, and there was something of a vow, and its seal; and Bones, who had sat, as became him, solemnly for the last few minutes, jumped, and tumbled, and scoured onward in over-joyous approval.

Thus they parted by the rippling tide, going their divers ways refreshed; Pak to his eager school-life, and Emmy to the quiet Rectory.



## CHAPTER XI.

### DEVELOPMENT.

**I**T could hardly be, that Pak should have remained in outward appearance and habits unaltered through all that had lately come upon him. In truth, a considerable change had set in. At his entrance into the school, this would be a matter of course; but the change had begun long before. The softening and brightening influence of Emmy—to say nothing of certain notable fingers, young and old, in Factory-lane while it yet stood—had told upon him, and had caused the disappearance of those shreds and patches for which he

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had once been eminent. However, this had been done in strict uniformity to the schoolman's maxim, "*Quidquid recipitur, in modum recipientis recipitur*,"—"Whatever is received, must be received after the fashion of the recipient." It is not to be supposed that he ever thought about it; certainly no one had lectured him on the matter, or it could never have come about as it did. As it was, gradual improvements during the year in which he had known Emmy put him, in most respects, on a level with other boys in outward appearance. But there was one matter in which he insisted on maintaining his singularity. No Scotchman could more value the privilege of going barefoot. For a privilege he counted it, to be free from those close and cramping cases into which we squeeze and distort our feet, to feel the fresh air of heaven

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ever blowing round them, and to be sensible of their hold on the ground, and their spring of unfettered motion. He had great theories about this, which have since been propounded by much more eminent persons : that, if the practice of going barefoot were more general in England, much expense might be saved to the lower classes, and much delicacy of frame to the higher. These theories he used to propound, after his wild fashion, to Emmy ; and in all such matters she looked up to him with wonder at his strange original fancies ; but I don't know that he ever got farther with her in practice, than to tempt her to a timid paddle among the pools at low water, or an unshod stroll over the clean warm sand.

But to return to himself. Until his reception into the school, he never put on stocking or shoe. It was easy, of late

at all events, to see that this was done not from poverty, but of purpose. Those who have been in Scotland, and have seen the clean fresh well-to-do girls and boys tripping to school, will know what such a description means. Even more than the difference between the begrimed and the pure hand, is that between the neglected and the well-kept foot; for it is the more beautiful member of the two.

When he entered the school, Dr. Digam, after listening to all he had to say on this point, merely bargained that on all public occasions he should appear like the rest; adding, "As to the schoolroom and playground, if you can stand their chaffing, do as you like—only I suspect you will soon give in." However, the Doctor was mistaken. The loose conventional slippers, put on for going up in class, were as often as not kicked off when he sat at his

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desk ; and in the playground, at every game, except football, the old practice was kept up. Chaff of course there was in abundance at first ; but it soon subsided, mainly by the influence of growing respect, also because it was not a very safe thing to carry chaff with Pak farther than he chose to have it carried. He could hit out very straight, and once or twice had performed this process rather unexpectedly, which circumstance made bullies and triflers be on their guard.

The general chaff concentrated itself into a second nickname, relevant to the practice, one in which the bearer of it very good-naturedly acquiesced. By the whole school Pak was known as "Toes." Even the Doctor himself, who generally used the more dignified appellation of "the great Unshod," had been known, in races and at cricket, to shout with



the rest, “ Now then, Toes !” “ Well hit, Toes !”

At last, as is the case with most tolerated eccentricities, it was liked, and even looked for. Pak at cricket, or in the boat, with shoes on, would have been a strange omen, requiring skilful augury to interpret.

To say that he got on well in the school,—that he made his way, or the like,—would be to tie down to common words a course which defied all common description. It was not *getting on*, for the superiority was established the first week, and never flagged ; nor was it making way, for there was no way to make. Time indeed was wanted for the thews and sinews of knowledge to harden, and become fit for constant use ; but knowledge itself was devoured with the fury of an insatiable appetite ; and beauty of

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thought, of diction, of rhythm, seemed to produce a mental intoxication, and to carry the young learner almost out of himself. By the end of the first year in the school, he was on a level with any boy in the sixth, though not in grammatical acquaintance with either Latin or Greek, yet in power of appreciation, which in him was almost instinctive, of great thoughts and grand descriptions. It was no uncommon thing to see him striding up and down the terraces of the South Cliff, spouting, in the wild wind, over the foamy sea below, his repetitions from Virgil or the *Iliad*. Next year came the *Odyssey*, even more glorious still; and before it was over, his most especial favourite, Theocritus. He has been seen sitting on the rocks as the tide came in, chanting, in Digam's peculiar wailing cadences, the deep melodies of the pas-

toral Sicilian, while the ripples lapped against the banks of seaweed, and the fringed polypi swayed in the brimming pools.

His mathematics were, as might be expected, mere play to him. Indeed in the ordinary mathematical school-work he took no part. Mr. Heckswy undertook him *con amore* as a private pupil, and found not much more necessary, than to modernise the somewhat cumbrous processes which he had acquired under his former quaint instructor.

That a friendship soon sprang up between these two, was no wonder. Heckswy had from the first taken a fancy to the lad; and as his powers developed under school treatment, the attachment became closer and closer. It grew all the more, because Pak certainly did not form friendships among the boys. His was a general

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popularity, arising very much from his prowess, mental and bodily ; but this was quite compatible with personal dislike ; and for any amount of this latter, the natural jealousy with which his career was viewed formed a substratum. Besides which, his hasty temper had brought him into personal collision, at one time or other, with nearly all his compeers ; and though passionate men are often strongly loved, they are very seldom widely liked. Again, admiration is less contagious than dislike. People persecute in flocks one whom they admire when alone. Pak in Netherton School was more a phenomenon than a power. The sixth were of course the better for having his genius among them ; but not so much better, as if it had been by many degrees less eminent. Where there is no rivalry, there is little imitation. When our equal is slightly our

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superior, we are drawn on ; when he is infinitely our superior, we are repelled. Besides which, the sixth, proud, as a sixth form ever ought to be, of their school and “the Doctor,” could never kindly tolerate Pak’s utter indifference to school for school’s sake. He never worked into the system ; how then could he fraternise with those who did ? Knowledge and beauty—these were his building ; the school was but the scaffolding ; and it never struck him to be proud of it, or to care for its good name.

It might well be supposed that there was much in this character which would rather grate on his good patron, the headmaster. Dr. Digam had taken him up, first from a noble sense of justice, and then from real admiration of his extraordinary and almost universal talent. Nothing could exceed his substantial kind-

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ness ; his just recognition of Pak's superiority was not for a moment interrupted ; but it could never be said that the two drew towards each other. The Doctor, an able man of fine mind and high sympathies, was yet essentially *of the school*. It was a great ideal, which years had erected, or perhaps rather had shed around him as an atmosphere in which he lived and moved, and had his being. Anyone in it, and not seeing it as he did, would not be likely to dwell very near his heart. His different way of viewing artificial systems, brought Pak into still wider divergence from the good Doctor. Their social and political creeds were in an antagonism hardly less than antipodal. Pak's bringing-up had been almost misanthropic ; and though his own good sense and kindness had very much corrected this, yet it had left on him a thorough

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disregard (for it was this, rather than contempt) of all that men hold venerable. This disregard, unhappily beginning, as we have seen, at the highest objects of veneration, extended down through kings and kaisers, robes and raiments, fasts and festivals—so that the Doctor, who was a fervent lover of institutions for institutions' sake, hardly ever found a *point d'appui* in his pupil's mind, when such matters were in treatment.

Of course Pak went to church with the school on Sundays and festivals. On the things there witnessed, he said hardly anything, except to his intimate friend Heckswy. Now and then he took part in a school criticism on the sermon; but his remarks did not hit the fancy of the sixth-form knowing ones, being generally on the logical non-cogency of certain arguments, whereas theirs were on the



framing in which the arguments had been set.

Even on the very rare occasions when he met Emmy, the great causes of their difference were now hardly ever touched on. She had, as we have heard, an enthusiastic faith that all would come right at last ; and seeing it only irritated him to be always dwelling on these topics, she wisely, and with womanly tact, abstained from them.

So grew this strange spirit during these years ; evidently not amalgamating with that which was around it, yet drawing tribute from it all, and richer for it day by day ; keeping in store for some contingency which was speedily coming on—none knew of what kind, or whither tending. It was what ordinary persons would call a prodigy, and perhaps would set beyond the ordinary bounds of pro-

bability. But prodigies, at certain times of life, are real things, not seldom found; but seldom, indeed, carrying on to the end. Certain flights and efforts of our humanity, taken alone, seem to raise it above itself in power; but it is no uncommon thing to find that the subject of this very elevation has been subdued by a word, and has fallen almost below the rest of us in weakness.

END OF VOL. I.



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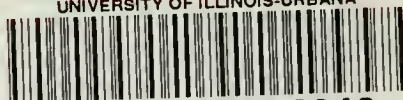
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